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The Adventures

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OF

AN ARKANSAS TRAVELER.

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BY CANNIBAL CHARLIE.

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THE ADVENTURES OF AN ARKANSAS TRAVELER.

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CHAPTER I.

"OLD RUFF."

IN that land described as the "Paradise of Savages"—a paradise the gallant Chevalier de Fonti was the first to invade and "settle"—the land of "salt prairies"—the land that was once the home of the now extinct "Arkansaws," transpired the scenes I would here relate.

My father was one of the first Anglo-Saxon settlers in the State of Arkansas, and, by the time I was eighteen years of age, he had made for his family a comfortable home. He owned several hundred acres of land, and a sufficient number of field-hands to cultivate a part of the estate with cotton.

From the age of thirteen I had materially assisted in subduing the wilderness that had been the home of my boyhood.

For more than five years I had been the constant companion of a man named Ruffian—a hunter employed by my father to supply the hands on the plantation with the greater part of their animal food.

"Old Ruff" and I cleared the forest of game and "varmint," and the "hands" slowly followed us, clearing the timber and planting the soil, while the principal business of my father was that of seeing that we all did the duty required of us.

Those were happy days—days of excitement and toil, followed by nights of profound repose.

I had but one source of anxiety or trouble. In the evening my father insisted on finishing what he called my "education." He would teach me something about mathematics—a whim which caused me much annoyance.

When I was thought too young to carry a rifle, my mother taught me to read and write, and seeing but very little advantage resulting from her labors, the efforts of my father seemed to curse my existence with useless agony. I could not see the slightest use his mathematics were to be in the future, as we might expect to find it in the West.

In the evening, when I should be cleaning my rifle and preparing bullets, he worried me with circles and angles.

When nearly twenty years of age this trouble was ended by my being plunged into a greater.

For two or three days "Old Ruff" and I had been very unsuccessful in procuring game, and one morning my father forbade our going out again on his account, or at his expense.

"You see, boys," said he, "that your business don't pay any longer. Often you don't bring home more than enough game to satisfy your own appetites. We should all starve if we only depended on what you bring in."

Old Ruff sighed heavily. He knew that my father's words were true—that there was no hunting worth looking after within two days' journey of the neighborhood.

"We've considerable stock that we can kill for our own use now," continued my father, "and bacon can be procured very cheap down the river. You can plainly see, Ruff, that I can't afford to keep a hunter any longer. I don't wish to part with you, for you have been with me many years, and have worked hard—so hard that I can afford to let you take the world a little more easy for the future. You can do yourself and me more good by looking after the herds on the plantation, than by hunting. As for you, Frank," continued my father, turning to me, "it's quite time you left here for the city. You know your mother and I are set on your learning some profession. We can afford to do something for you now, and you must try to become a credit to us."

For some time there was a silence, which was broken by "Old Ruff."

"Squire!" exclaimed the hunter, addressing my father

in his usual manner, "do you think it's possible for me to leave off toting this gun, and turn nigger-driver? We've been acquainted nigh on to twenty years, and I thought you knowed me better. Why, Squire, as they say in New Orleans, 'I'd rather sell picayune ices in the streets of purgatory.'"

The sensitive feelings of Old Ruff were cruelly wounded, and, "more in sorrow than in anger," he commenced preparations for his departure further West.

Nothing any of the family could say appeared to have the slightest effect in changing the resolution he had taken for seeking another home.

My younger brothers and sisters were all great admirers of Old Ruff. His voice shook a little as he bade them good by, and I fancied that his eyes were a little more shiny than usual, but in no other way did he betray any emotion. With a small bundle of clothing on his back, and his rifle over his shoulder, Old Ruff started away.

I was sadly grieved to see my old companion depart in that manner, for I had a great reverence for him and his rifle. The two seemed to have but one history in the past. I knew that it was an eventful one—and that the rifle, of which he always spoke in an affectionate manner by the name of "Mary," had been named by him after an old sweetheart, loved and lost many years ago. With that rifle he had long earned his daily bread, and passed through many exciting scenes. His occupation in the neighborhood of my father's plantation was gone, but I was certain that Ruff would yet meet plenty of work with his rifle in some land further west, and I envied him the pleasure he would find in the occupation he was going to pursue.

I accompanied the old fellow a little way on his journey, and complained to him bitterly of the cruel fate that prevented me from sharing in his fortunes.

"Your father is quite right, Master Frank," said Ruff. "You must not be a hunter always. Look at me, and see what the business brings one to. Howsoever, 'tain't no consequence, as far as I'm consarned, but with you it's different. You've got parents and other relations, and you owe them the duty of becoming respectable. You're not free, like me. Thar is no one to be ashamed of me, whatever I am, but you are obliged to be respectable."

I asked Ruff if he had any idea as to where he was going.

"Yes," replied the old hunter. "I've hern tell of a small lake between a large patch of timber and a broad prairie, about a hundred miles to the west. I shall fust go thar."

I made Ruff a present of a large plug of tobacco, which I had taken from my father's store for that purpose, and reluctantly bade him good-bye.

Old Ruff was naturally an honest man. His mind had never been contaminated by the struggle of buying cheap and selling dear. He had never associated with people guilty of deception, prevarication, falsehood, gentle robbery and downright meanness for the sake of being respectable. He was such a man as an honest person could respect, and only those who think more of the opinion of others than they do of themselves could look upon him with contempt.

CHAPTER II.

I BECOME AN EXILE.

My father was soon to depart for Little Rock, for the purpose of selling his cotton crop, and great preparations were made by the whole family in providing me with an outfit to accompany him.

Several yards of "pepper and salt" home-made cloth were made up by the women, and I was furnished with three suits of clothes, which, to my disgust, were all alike. They were made much too large for me, by the instructions of my mother, who said that I had got to grow much larger.

I did not like leaving my rifle behind, and while trying to devise some way of taking it unknown to my parents, I was relieved from all anxiety on that account by my father, who told me that I should never want my gun again; I had better take it to town, where I would some time have an opportunity of selling it.

The cheerful way in which I received this proposa

pleased him much. He thought that my propensity for hunting had died, in obedience to the wishes of the family that I should learn a profession.

My father's nearest neighbor was a planter named Shelley, who had "located" in Arkansas at the time my father did, and from the same place.

The two families were very friendly with each other, especially two of the younger members of it—myself and Mr. Shelley's daughter, Mary—a girl about fifteen years old. I do not know whether Mary Shelley was a good-looking girl or not. I only know that I thought so.

For some reason I then did not distinctly understand my reluctance to depart for Little Rock was greater when thinking of her than at any other time.

I used to meet Mary every Sunday, and sometimes oftener. She was waiting until we were old enough to marry. She often told me so, and I never doubted her word, having never known her to be the least untruthful.

One afternoon I went to bid her good-bye. She was nearly inconsolable when I told her that I was going away, but young as she was, she seemed pleased at the idea of my learning a profession, which she thought was the proper thing to do, for her mother had said that it was time I was doing something else besides running through the forest, carrying a gun.

Mary promised to be true to me, should I not be gone too long, and I left her with her apron before her face.

On reaching Little Rock, and having a talk with some of his acquaintances there, my father determined that I should acquire a little more school education before commencing a course of reading for a profession. This, he was told, was a proper thing to do, and arrangements were made for me to attend an "Academy" in the town for six months, when, if industrious, I might be qualified for entering a lawyer's office.

Having made a sale of his cotton and transacted all other business to his satisfaction, he gave me fifty dollars, some good advice, and left for home.

Amongst the youths attending the school were sons of several merchants of the town—young men who wore "store clothes," or clothing purchased at the slop-shops of New Orleans. They looked like gentleman compared with the odly-clothed youths whose garments, in many

instances, had been cut and made from home-made cloth by some black seamstress on a plantation.

The youth whose "home-mades" were the most conspicuous in color, the most ill-fitting and old-fashioned, was myself. The coat hung as gracefully over my back as a shirt on a broomstick. The small clothes were everything but small, and I could not but admit that I was a fit subject for more ridicule than any other youth of the school.

I would not have tamely submitted to any ridicule to which I was not justly entitled, but knowing that my appearance commanded their attention, I listened to their witty remarks with the philosophy that Socrates might have envied. I learned to "suffer and be strong."

Some of my school-fellows were not so patient under the jeers of others as myself, and serious quarrels often occurred between them. They were sons of "chivalrous sons of the Sunny South," and I was another, but they were more highly educated than I. They knew what was right and what was wrong. I could be insulted without knowing it. They could not; and the greatest fear that some of them seemed to know, was that of losing an opportunity of resenting an imaginary or real insult.

Two of my companions purchased a watermelon, each paying an equal share. In dividing it a quarrel arose, and one stabbed the other with the knife he had used in cutting the melon. The wounded youth was confined to his home for a fortnight, and the other was gently reprimanded for exhibiting a passionate temper.

One day I expressed an opinion, and was called a "liar." This was "fighting talk," but I did not resent it.

The boy who used the word was much less than myself, and I could have torn him in pieces as easily as an eagle, but I would not. Had I attempted to give him a gentle rebuke, in the way of boxing his ears, he would have defended himself with a knife.

In fact, he placed his hand on one, after trying to insult me, and seemed much disgusted at my not giving him an opportunity of using it. I was not influenced by fear, but I thought it would be a foolish act to kill him. At school I was a dunce, a fool and a coward. This was not only the opinion of my school-fellows, and I was afraid it would soon be my own.

In the forest, with Old Ruff, I was a sensible young man, an intelligent being, capable of commanding respect from any living creature.

This was not the case at Little Rock, and I determined to leave it. Several reasons strengthened this resolution. I disliked school, and the restraint under which I was compelled to live, and loved the freedom of a hunter's life.

Knowing that I had an old friend on the prairie, who might easily be found, I commenced making arrangements for once more seeking the companionship of Old Ruff. I knew that he would find good hunting, but I could no longer live in misery, when happiness was to be found by joining him.

A letter would be more than a week in reaching my father; I made no attempt to conceal my intentions.

For twenty dollars I purchased a mule, and the next day started on my journey.

My luggage consisted of a Mackinaw blanket, some powder and lead, a little salt, a pint flask of brandy and a change of clothes, except a coat and hat.

I was an "Arkansas Traveler."

CHAPTER III:

AN ADVENTURE WITH A RATTLESNAKE.

That part of the State for which Old Ruff had departed was generally spoken of, amongst the planters as "Fouche's land."

Fouche was a Lousianian, of French descent, who resided for several years amongst the red men, and his name was often given to a part of the State, about one hundred miles square.

To reach this land without passing through the neighborhood of home, I took the south bank of the river, and for the first time became what in that part of the world is called a "Stranger."

For several days I met with but few hardships on my journey — being hospitably entertained at the plantations along the way.

Early one afternoon I reached a track, leading to some buildings about a mile from the path I was following. I had noticed, before reaching this track, that the mule had been stepping out at a sharper pace than he had before traveled since our departure from Little Rock.

Turning from the path I wished it to follow, the mule bolted down the other, with a determination that would not be controlled. Bridle, spurs, and commands, were of no use in checking it. The brute had evidently resolved to halt for the night, much earlier than I desired, and would not be stopped in his way.

From a sharp trot it struck into a gallop, and we reached the collection of stables and negro-huts, as though it was the winning post of a race-course.

My arrival was witnessed with much surprise and some amusement, by several negroes—men, women and children, who hastened out of the huts to meet me.

The surprise, however, was not shared by one old darkey, who came forward, and addressed the mule by the name of "Pete."

"I allers sed dat mule would cum back agin," he exclaimed, turning to some of his colored companions, "and beah he ar. I've ben 'specting him every day for morn four years."

I afterwards learnt from the proprietor of the plantation that the mule had been stolen from him about five years before. He made no claim upon it, however, and after partaking of his hospitality until the next morning, I was allowed to depart.

The mule made no objection to continuing the journey.

It had paid a visit to its early home—been kindly received, and seemed philosophically resigned to fulfill its duty.

I saw that it was an intelligent animal, and determined not to part with it without some good reason—such as having it stolen—taken from me by death—or being offered for it a few dollars more than it was worth.

The last plantation was passed, and I reached the unbroken wilderness of the Great West. Again I was free—more free than I had ever been before, for I had not now the nightly attraction of a home. Wherever there was wood for a fire, water to drink, and grass for the mule, I could make a temporary dwelling place.

On every open space of ground small herds of the

deer species were feeding, and others were met in the shade of every belt of timber, but I had not yet reached the place where I might expect to find Old Ruff.

I knew that he was not hunting game for food alone, but that he would be found where the business could be followed with some profit—where valuable hides and furs could be procured and stored in a *cache*, to be sent sometimes to market.

I knew that he was ambitious of once more “throwing buffaloes,” and having a “far fight with a bar,” and I had not yet reached a hunting ground where those animals were plentiful. My journey must be continued still further, for I had not reached the lake the hunter had so often described.

The work of having to dress and cook my own food—of having to prepare my bed from branches and leaves of the forest, and other inconveniences and hardships, that would have been almost unendurable to some, were but pleasing to me, for I had been educated a hunter, and there was a wild, indescribable joy in the knowledge that I was now independent of the aid of others—that I could play my own hand with nature unassisted, and win from her a living. I was not a child that needed nursing by society any longer.

One day I rode for three or four miles alongside of a “branch,” trying to find a place to cross it. Although the stream was narrow, the banks were high and perpendicular, and my only plan was to travel until I could find a place more favorable for my object.

On the other side of the stream was a level plain, covered with grass—a small prairie, on which several flocks of animals were feeding. The side I was anxious to leave was thinly clad with stunted trees—the most of them having branches too near the ground for me to ride under them.

Just as my way was blocked by a large tree, with branches spreading far and low, I heard a peculiar, yet no familiar sound. It was that of a rattlesnake.

No man or beast can hear this sound, either for the first or the hundredth time, without being startled by it.

There is something in it that strikes consternation and fear in the soul of everything that has ears, and gives a sudden and an involuntary desire to move away. It is a soul-startling, fear-giving, horrible noise, that seems to come from everywhere, and man or beast can no more

refrain from moving in some direction, either right or wrong, than they can from breathing.

As the sound struck my ears, my face was dashed against the twigs and small branches of a large bough of the tree before-mentioned. Pete, the mule, was obeying the warning—the command given by what the “Wisconsin bard” calls the “awful-sounding tail,” and was passing under the branches of the tree without the slightest consideration for me.

It was a thoughtful and intelligent animal, and I believe, if allowed time for reflection, it would have known better, but under the influence of fear I was not heeded, and was swept from its back by the large branch under which the mule passed.

I fell heavily upon my back, and as I rolled over and put my hand on the ground, to assist myself in rising, the hand was placed on a cold, smooth, slippery, substance.

My hand was grasping the snake, but a few inches below its head. Its jaws, far extended, were but a few inches from my face. Its forked tongue was protruding, and waving near my nose.

Its small bright eyes seemed emitting flashes of electricity—so intense did they glare upon me.

The crooked fangs in the upper jaw were gleaming over me ready to fall, but they did not. My left hand grasped the creature's neck, and moving it as far from me as possible, I clenched the fingers with a force that threatened to break them. A coil or bight of the serpent then struck me in the face.

The atmosphere seemed poisoned with its breath.

It was apparently trying to embrace me with its coils, in return for the grip I had on its neck.

I struggled to arise, while the snake seemed trying to prevent me. For some time we fought, wrestled, and tried to strangle each other. I know not how long this battle continued, but the victory remained with me. I rose to my feet and whipped the earth with its long, writhing body. I threw a glittering coil of its body on a large stone and broke its back with the heel of my boot, and then threw the helpless, dying thing from me, and was free. So horror-struck and disgusted was I with this encounter, that for a few minutes I would not have been displeased had some supernatural power set me down at Little Rock, or even in Ireland, where there are no snakes.

CHAPTER IV.

AN INCIDENT BY THE WAY.

AFTER picking up my rifle, and other property that was scattered around, I started for the mule, which was grazing about two hundred yards away.

I was faint and weak—hardly able to stand, and a strange feeling of thirst was upon me.

For a few minutes I was afraid that, on first being thrown from the mule, I had been bitten by the snake, for my face and hands were scratched in many places, and, from the difficulty I found in walking, the King of Terrors seemed to have his hand upon me. Such, however, was not the case. My indisposition was only the result of fear—the unpleasant effects of which were being displayed after all danger was over.

After once more commencing my journey, I had to travel for more than an hour before finding a place where I could scramble down the bank of the stream for a drink of water. Before going down I unsaddled the mule, and turned it loose to graze, as I had resolved to have a rest in the shade.

The "branch" was flowing through a red; sandy loam, that much discolored the water. From the shining, crystallized salt I saw glittering on the opposite bank, I was fearful that my journey must be continued somewhat further that day before my raging thirst could be satisfied. My fears were not without reason, for, on tasting the water, it proved to be very salt, and I knew that drinking it would only increase my thirst.

While I was tasting the quality of the water, several small pieces of earth were falling down about me, and, on looking up, I saw that Pete, the mule, was threatening to come down and join me.

The greater portion of his body seemed hanging over the brink, about fifteen feet above my head. I shouted to him to keep back, but he still continued trying if it were not possible to put his nose into the stream without coming down bodily.

There was hardly room for me to get out of the way, should Pete fail in his experiment and come down. I should have to plunge in the water, or stand and catch him.

In vain I advised, entreated and commanded him to keep back, but tantalized by the sight of the shining liquid, he pressed forward a little too far, and the next instant we were both in the water.

I rose to the surface a few feet below the place where I had plunged in, and saw that Pete was steadily holding his position against the flood. His obstinate, mulish disposition would not allow him to move in the direction the current would naturally have taken him.

Perhaps I am doing the animal much injustice. It might, like myself, have examined the banks of the stream for some distance below, and know that it would be unable to make a landing. Whatever may have been the cause, the mule struggled with the current, and I was surprised at seeing him making headway against it.

It was more than I could do without the greatest exertion, and I never remembered of being more weak and helpless. With much difficulty I succeeded in reaching the place where I had fallen in, and once more made a foothold on the bank.

As this feat was accomplished, I saw Pete turn a sharp point of land, about thirty yards above, and disappear from my sight.

After a brief repose I attempted to climb the bank, but found the feat impossible. In coming down I had made use of a large root projecting from the side of the bank. The mule, in its descent, had broken that away, and without its use I was unable to reach that part of the bank where the incline was not so steep but what I could scramble up. I was in a "fix."

By trusting myself to the current and floating down, I knew that I should have a long distance to go before finding a convenient place to land. For three or four miles below I knew that the stream ran through soft loam, through which it had cut a deep passage, and I would not trust myself to explore it.

There was one more chance. It was to follow the mule, and see what could be found above.

Once more I entered the water and breasted the stream.

I was never a good swimmer, and now found myself wholly unable to make any headway against the current. On this occasion despair did not give me strength, and I was still unusually weak from the fall or fright I had received earlier in the day. The effort resulted in my being very glad to get back to the place where I could find a rest for the soles of my feet.

There was yet another chance. The soil of the bank being soft, I might make a pathway up the side by digging with my bowie-knife.

At this work I immediately commenced, and for awhile was quite pleased with the progress I made at it.

By the time I had gained four steps up the side of the bank, my hands were much blistered and very weary, but a little more work would enable me to reach a place where the incline was not so perpendicular, and I began to feel much better.

Before I could mount another step, the loose earth gave way under me, and I fell below. All my work was undone.

I feel pleasure in recording the fact that I uttered no oath—muttered no complaints, or expressed my disappointment in any way, but patiently went to work, with my blistered hands, in making a new road up the bank.

The current of the stream seemed suddenly to have set against the side where I was at work. The earth under me was becoming less firm.

Large pieces of the soft loam were melting away in the water, as though they were made of Muscavado sugar.

I should soon have no place to stand upon, and could already fancy myself to be sinking lower. Yes, there was soon no doubt of the fact. The current of the stream was changing, and the soft earth on which I stood would soon be wasted away.

The sun was already setting, and I could have but a few minutes more to work.

Again I commenced using the knife with frantic energy—the energy of despair.

My labor would be in vain. I knew it, yet Nature bade me work.

Just as I was beginning to think that Nature was a fool, and that she was inducing me to die, like another, I heard the foot-strokes of horses on the turf above.

They were followed by the sound of a human voice.

"Look, hyar Bill," some one exclaimed, "hyar's a shootin' iron and some other plunder."

I called for help, and immediately after the end of a lariat was dropped over the bank and I was drawn to the top.

CHAPTER V.

BUCK AND BILL.

ON reaching the turf above, I found two hunters who had dismounted from their horses to assist me. One of them was not more than five feet five inches in height, but he had the broadest shoulders and the longest arms I had ever seen. His eyes were in some way prohibited from acting in concert—each rolling wildly, independent of the other, and a long tooth projecting from his upper jaw over a thick under-lip, gave his features a demoniac expression, painful to witness. He was the one I had heard addressed as Bill.

The other was a tall, lank man, with sharp features and a sallow complexion. He looked as though he had been dried and tanned on the prairies for the last thirty years.

"Whur's the creetur that totes this saddle?" he asked, "and what wur you down thur for?"

I explained in as few words as possible.

The man, Bill, frightened me with a smile as he said:

"I should have thought that the mule had more sense than to go down thar. It must have been owned by a fool a long time."

"Never mind what my comrade hyar says," replied the other, turning to me. "He never speaks a pleasant word eyther to frens or strangers."

The creature of whom he was speaking now mounted his horse and started up the river.

"Our camp is not mor'n a quarter of a mile up the branch," said his companion. "Thar's plenty of good water thar, and you ought to have known it, by the lay of the land, had you looked ahead."

I picked up my rifle and blanket, and followed him.

Before we had gone more than three hundred yards, the whole face of the country seemed to have suddenly changed. We reached lower ground, where the stream was running broad and shallow over a sand-stone bottom, and quite clear.

A short distance further on we reached a hut made of boughs and bark, and my companions were at their camp.

They gave me some stewed venison, and afterwards a "tall drink" of whisky; and a few minutes after I fell asleep, and knew no more until the next day.

In the morning, Pete, the mule, was found grazing near where the hunters' horses were tethered.

Had we followed up the stream but a few yards further, we could both have reached it in safety, and could have found water unimpregnated with the red saline loam.

Believing that I was somewhere in the neighborhood of where Old Ruff should be found, I gave a description of him, and of the general features of the country he had gone in search of, and asked them if they knew such a man and place.

"Yes," replied the tall man, whom the other called "Buck," "thar is such a man as you describe, camped on the shore of a lake, about ten miles from hyar. He's been thar about three months. Whar did you know him?"

I did not wish to state what part of the country I was from, for I believed that most of the hunters had some communication with the border settlements to the east, and I was unwilling to give my parents any chance at present of learning where I was.

Without thinking that they might have heard a different story, I told them that I was acquainted with Ruffian in Missouri, from whence I had lately come.

The two hunters exchanged glances, and a suspicion crossed my mind that I had made a mistake.

"What mout your name be?" asked the animal called Bill.

I was in company with rude, plain-speaking backwoodsmen, who would not appreciate or understand politeness, and replied that it might be Andrew Jackson, but that it was not, and that they might call me Frank.

Although men of the forest and prairie, they were also men of the world, and were not the least offended at my indisposition to being "pumped." They would not have submitted to that themselves.

"We shall pass by Ruff's camp this morning," said Buck, "and if you want to find him, git yerself ready for a start."

Fortune seemed trying to make amends for the cruel way she had treated me the day before. I had heard of Old Ruff, and in two or three hours should be at his camp.

During our ride that morning but few words were spoken.

My companions were like other hunters and trappers I had seen—generally silent, and I have since observed that men who have been long engaged in those occupations, seldom talk for amusement, unless around the camp-fire at night.

During the day, or on a march, they only speak as few words as possible. When not talking, I do not believe that they are thinking. They are generally chewing tobacco.

A ride of about three hours over a level country, spotted with a few groves of linden trees, brought us to the shore of a beautiful lake. It was not more than three miles in its greatest distance across, and was apparently bordered on three sides by a dense forest.

In place of finding a solitary hunter's camp, I was surprised at finding a collection of rude huts or wigwams, made of bushes and bark.

Several men, dressed as hunters, were loitering about, and a drove of tame horses and cattle were grazing on the plains, that bordered one side of the lake.

Amongst the people in the camp were three or four negroes, engaged in dressing and cooking food.

I was anxious to see Ruff, if he was in camp, and learn an explanation of the strange scene around me. This desire was expressed to the inhuman-looking Bill, who remained by me.

"All right," he answered, "Buck has gone for him, and they'll be hyer in a minute."

From these words, I learnt that there was a determination with the two hunters, that Ruff and I should first meet in their presence.

Bill's words were those of truth, for Buck soon made his appearance, followed by my old companion.

Old Ruff rushed forward and grasped my hand.

"Master Frank!" he exclaimed, "this is the most joy-some minute of my life. How did you escape?"

"Stop a minute," said Buck—"Before you two have a contab I'm gwine to ask you a few questions. Whar did you last see this lad?" he asked, turning to Ruff.

"I've told you," replied the hunter, "that I kim from Louzyanna, and I suppose Mr. Frank, hyer, has told you that he kim from some other place, yet we knows each other. Wall! what of it. Nyther of us wants you to know whar we come from, and we've had no chance of seeing each other, to make our stories tally together."

"I don't ask to know whar you come from, or whether you stole a hoss or a nigger, that you had to run away for."

"That's a fact," answered Bill, "you don't know anything about it."

"Yes, I do know something about it. I know that *you* never had to slide from the clearings, for doing a forgery, because you can't write."

This put Buck into good humor. "I dare say it's all right," said he.

"We should'nt expect you'd tell the truth to strangers. 'Tain't right you should. All we want is, no double dealing with us. We shall trust your friend with you—and mind he does no mischief, or you'll have to suffer for it. You have a talk with him about business."

Ruff promised to do as required, and soon after we were left alone.

CHAPTER VI.

INQUIRIES AFTER TRUTH.

"WHAT does this mean, Ruff?" I asked, as soon as the others had departed. "These men are not hunters. What are they here for, and why are you with them?"

"No; they are not hunters or trappers," answered Ruff. "Nyther are we, at present, and God only knows when we shall be."

"But what are the men whom we see about us?"

"Cattle-runners, hoss-thieves, nigge--tealers, and murderers," answered Ruff, "I've ben with 'em for mor'n two months, and I'm gwine to stop with 'em some time longer, I hope."

"Then, Ruff, I must leave you. I've had a long journey, and suffered some hardships to find you, and I hoped to meet you an honest hunter—not the companion of thieves and outlaws, as I believe those men are who have just left us."

"You are quite right, Master Frank, in all you say and think, and so are all your family, but I tell you that at present, I'm with these men heart and soul, and you must be with me. We must be thieves, murderers—anything to please them."

"Ruff; what do you mean? Have you gone mad? Why don't you explain?"

"I am explaining as fast as I can, or as fast as you will let me," answered Ruff, "and hyer's one pint you must not forget for a single minute. If thar's anything on 'arth the men hate, it is what you call an honest hunter. They look upon him as a varmint not fit to live. They have druv every genuwine hunter and trapper out of the d ggins."

"But why have they not driven you out! Why do you remain with them?"

"I'm explaining as fast as I can. Now, when eny of 'em are hy, do you never speak of the bar we once killed, or of eny of our hunting affairs. If ever you have occasion to use your shooting-iron afore 'em, allers miss the mark. Allers appear as much like a town-fool as you can, and then they'll trust you."

"But I don't want them to trust me," I exclaimed. "Tell me what you mean. Why do you not explain?"

"I'm explaining everything as fast as you will let me," replied Ruff, in a voice that showed he was a little annoyed at my impatience; "and hyer's another thing I must caution you about. You don't swar. Now sich morality don't suit our present position or society. You must larn to swar a blue streak on the smallest occasion."

I followed Ruff's advice immediately, and commenced practicing the art or vice of using bad language.

I cursed and swore at him to the best of my ability, for not making what he called an explanation, in a way to please me instead of himself.

Old Ruff smiled.

"That's right, Master Frank," said he; "I see you are not unwillin' to folly my advice, and now I want to ask you a few questions. Was your father, mother, and the girls well when you left?"

"Yes, quite well, but will—"

"Thar, thar! don't interrupt me. They are all right, and thank God for that; but now let me give some more advice. Dont you ever speak afore these men of father or mother, or of any relations. If eny of 'em asks your name, say it's Jones. You must never mention your father's name afore Buck or Bill. If they knew your name was Frank Rosebrook, they'd have a bright suspicion. We'd both be killed."

I felt quite unable to stand this talk any longer, and gave Ruff to understand that such was the case, as plainly as I could.

I started away from him.

"Stop a minute. Frank," he continued. "I've not much more to say. You know nearly all."

"I only know that you have gone mad or silly," I replied, "and will not listen to you any longer, without learning something."

"But I *am* telling you something, as fast as I can, and nothing—no, not one word but what you must know. Now thar's your father's neighbor, Mr. Shelley. You

must not mention his name, or even the name of your little sweet-heart, Mary Shelley, or they will star at you, and perhaps ask questions."

Ruff had mentioned a name that was music in my ears, and I believe that the sound of it so much subdued my ill-humor, that I patiently resigned myself to the task of learning what he had to communicate by letting him have his own way uninterrupted.

After listening to him for more than an hour, I learnt that his companions were not men who had chosen the prairies as a residence, through the love of a hunter's life, but through necessity.

Some had escaped from the rudely-constructed border prisons. Some had fled to the West, to escape being brought before a jury of their countrymen. All were runaways from justice, and outcasts from all society but their own.

They were wishing to migrate to Texas, and had united together for protection during the journey.

During the last three or four months, they had made two excursions to the nearest plantations to the north, and had picked up several horses and cattl, and five negroes, all of which they were going to take on their journey. I could understand and believe all that Ruff told me, but what I wished to learn most, was that which he seemed most determined not to tell.

Why had he joined such a gang of ruffians? Why did he remain with them? Why did he wish me to join them? Why had he given me so many singular instructions?

Before Ruff had touched upon any of these points, to which I had done all in my power to lead him, we were called to dinner.

CHAPTER VII.

RUFF STILL MYSTERIOUS.

FIVE white men besides Ruff and myself gathered around the pieces of venison, that had been cooked for us, and I was told by Ruff that two more were away on an expedition, in which they expected to discover a trapper's *cache*, and remove its contents.

Amongst my new companions there was only one who carried an honest-looking face.

He was a young man, about twenty-three years of age, and had eyes with a wild expression, although a little unsteady in their gaze. Unlike the others, his features did not bear an expression of cunning, deceit or malice. If he was a bad man, he was the most dangerous of the lot, for there was but little deception in the others. Any one who would have trusted them, could never have paid any attention to learning Nature's hand-writing, as it is written on the human face.

The conversation was noisy and general.

"I suppose we shall all turn respectable planters when we get to Texas," said one of the men. "I shall, for one. What do you say, Buck!"

"Yes, dangerously respectable," replied the person addressed.

"I don't believe thar's sich a thing as a respectable planter on this varsal 'arth" said Ruff. "Boatmen is good, and lumbermen and wood-cutters is not a bad sort o' creeturs, but a big cuss on all planters."

"Why! how are they wuss than others?" said Bill with the wolf-tooth.

"Because they want to own all natur, and govern everything arter thar own fashion. Hosses, cattle, niggers and poor white folks must work fur 'em, while they

do nothing but gives orders, make laws, and spend all the money. But I'll let some of 'em know thar's a Ruffian in the world yet. I'm not one of the things belongin' to 'em. Thar's somethin' in the business of a planter that makes him the natral enemy of every other livin' creatur, and I dar say, if I should ever git to be one, I should lose my present respectability, and become as bad as any of 'em.

"Now, I once knowed a young feller that worked with me on a flat-boat many years ago. He war all right then, but some of his relations up and died one day, and left him a heap of money, and he turned all over a planter. I went to see him in Louzyanna, jist afore I came hyer, and the cussed skunk would not remember me. I was so riled that I could not help havin' a skirmmage with him, in which he kim off pretty considerably the wust. Another planter, who was enything but a just-ass of the Peace, sentenced me to three months' imprisonment in the county jail. The Sheriff's hotel was nothin' but a block-house—too soft to hold me, and one night I walked out—went into the sheriff's private residence—borrowed his rifle, and brought it hyer on another man's hoss, and thar's the rifle," added Ruff, as he pointed to a tree, against which was leaning the gun, that, under the name of "Mary," I had known him to carry for more than twelve years.

"But how and whar did you bekim acquainted with your young friend, the stranger?" asked Buck.

Bill with the wolf-tooth gave a grunt, which I understood as an approval of the question being proposed.

"He writes a very pretty hand," answered Ruff, "but the most silly thing he ever recorded was the sentence condemning me to three month's imprisonment in a soft house. He mout have known that I'd not stop thar, for I wos once the skipper of one of his father's flat-boats."

"But what's he hyer for?" asked another.

"Go on, Frank and pitch 'em a lie—a good one, while you are at it," said Ruff.

I denied the right of the company to know anything of my past history, and refused to gratify their curiosity.

"I suppose he's bashful, being young," said Buck; "but he'll git partly over that afore he's much older. Do you want to go to Texas?" he asked, turning to me.

I replied in the affirmative.

"Wall, you must be a good boy when you git thar. In

fact we must all behave pretty, for it's the last place of refuge, except hell.

"I heard a story the other day about a child of natur' in Texas, who had been guilty of taken some of his mother's property. He had stolen a nigger, and on larnin that the sheriff was lookin' for him, he went to a lawyer for advice. The lawyer told him the best thing he could do, was to slide.

"'Whar shall I slide to?' asked the child of natur. 'I'm in Texas now.' You can see from this," continued Buck, "that when we git to Texas, we shall have to trade accordin' to lor."

The conversation of the company was amusing, but my thoughts were partly diverted from it by trying to comprehend the strange conduct of old Ruff.

Why had he amused the company with a made-up story about escaping from a Louisiana jail, and the sheriff's rifle. Why did he wish his comrades to believe that he was a refugee from justice, and that I was nother.

I did not care whether the men were go ng to Texas, or not. I wished to know nothing of their history or business, but what I *did* wish to know, Ruff had carefully concealed from my knowledge, notwithstanding all my efforts to make him explain. Although much annoyed at his conduct, my mind was not wholly engaged in fretting about it, for occasionally an inquiry would arise as to where I had seen the young man called Harry, whom I have already mentioned, as one whose appearance awakened no aversion or dislike. His features had a familiar appearance—not such as I had seen within a few weeks, but as though they had been slightly changed by time.

On our leaving the others, I expressed this opinion to Old Ruff. "Do you want to have me shot, or hung to a tree, or burnt alive?" exclaimed the old hunter, as I saw the first expression of alarm on his features; "if not, then do you stop thinkin'. I believe if you had an opportunity, you'd get into a yarn with that fellow, and try to find out whar you'd seen him. You'd let him know whar you're from. They'd all find out that I'd ben deceivin' 'em, and they'd cut the throats of the par of us."

"What for?" I asked. "Why should they care where we are from?"

"That's what I have been trying to explain to you all day, but you seem detarmined not to understand. Now, do you mind what I tell you. Don't say a word to that

young fellow about anything, or he'll find you out, and I can't trust him.

"I can trust no one—not even you, although all you love most on 'arth depends on your being cautious as a fox, and understanding every word I say." Ruff's conduct was driving me nearly frantic.

"No more of your nonsense," I exclaimed, "but tell me what you mean. You shall annoy me no longer. If you have anything to tell me, say it now."

"Of course I've something to tell you," answered Ruff, "and I have been trying to do it ever since you came, but you will not listen. When I first saw you to day, my heart jumped for joy, for I thought that I should have some one to help me, but I'm beginnin' to wish you'd kept away, and let me play my hand alone."

I felt a painful, choking sensation, as my heart seemed to rise into my throat.

Making a violent effort, I controlled my rage, and walked away to look after the welfare of Pete, who was grazing on the plain with a drove of other animals, under the care of a negro.

Years ago I had noticed that Ruff would never come to a point on any subject that seemed uppermost in his mind. He would talk over and around it for hours, and say nothing.

About two years before, he once found two bear cubs in a hollow tree.

This discovery was made late in the afternoon, and blocking up the entrance to the tree, so that they could not escape, he came home. That evening he gave me to understand that there was an adventure for me the next day, and excited my curiosity to the utmost. This annoyance was continued during a walk of five miles the next morning, and I never learnt anything about the purpose of our journey until I heard the young bears growling within the log.

Undoubtedly with the best intentions Ruff was serving me in the same way again. The secret he had to tell me was one of much importance. I was certain of that. It was one that he hardly dare breathe to himself. He seemed haunted by a constant dread that it would be discovered by his evil companions, and any approach towards making that secret known to another was made with fear and caution.

I resolved to wait patiently until morning, and then

adopt a plan that would make him explain his strange conduct.

I had long ago learnt that men on the prairies were possessed of extreme characters—that there were to be found amongst them some of the most noble, and some of the most contemptible persons on earth. Ruff was one of the former. He was a companion of two or more of the latter. Why should this be? This was the mystery I was determined to learn without further delay, or seek other society.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

THAT evening the two absent men of the company returned. They had three led horses, each heavily laden.

Amongst the "cargo" of the horses were nine bear-skins, and several hundred minx, wild-cat, and other skins, which they had taken from the *cache* of some hard-toiling hunters.

They were sharp fellows—those two who had found and robbed the *cache*.

They knew there was a stranger in the camp before they reached it, for they had seen Pete's track in company with the tracks of horses, which they knew belonged to their companions, Buck and Bill.

During the evening one of them, who closely examined the "pepper and salt" with which my clothing was made, asked me if I was not from the interior of Arkansas.

Buck, Bill and two or three others exchanged glances with each other.

"No," I replied, "although I believe my coat came from there. I met a young man who was going to Little Rock, and having a suspicion that my 'store clothes' would not look respectable on the prairie, and as he did not care about appearing in town in 'pepper and salt,

we made a 'swap.' His 'home-mades' fit me a little too much, but that is more my fault than that of the maker."

When I was asked if I was not from the interior of Arkansas the young man, Harry, whose familiar appearance had troubled me so much, turned upon me an inquiring gaze, which remained fixed on my features for more than a minute.

Suddenly his features seemed illumined by what I knew to be a mental light—the settlement of a doubt—the removal of a cloud from the mental vision—the death of a query.

It was not until that expression came over his face that a light suddenly dawned upon my own mind.

I recognized the youth, Harry, as an old playmate of my boyhood.

Two miles from my father's plantation there once lived an old bachelor named Barton, who kept a "store"—a place where the surrounding inhabitants could purchase Bibles, boots and butter, shirts, sugar and saucepans, powder, pills, pitchforks, and nearly every thing else they wanted. He was a brother of Mrs. Shelby, of the family I have before mentioned, but was not on friendly terms with his sister or her husband.

Mr. Barton had also a nephew—a youth with a low and narrow forehead, who was of some assistance to him in his business. I often used to go to the store and pass an hour or two in company with his nephew, Harry Barton, and whenever he had a holiday he generally passed it with me, usually at angling in a little stream that crossed my father's plantation. As we grew a little older our acquaintance ceased. In fact, there was a feeling of jealousy between us, on account of Mary Shelby, his cousin, whom I have before mentioned.

Mary used to say that Harry was a bad, wicked boy, and eventually used to see as little of him as possible. Mr. Barton was a feeble man, who had not possessed good health for many years, and Mary had told me that her Cousin Harry had often expressed the wish that the old man would make haste and die. "When he does go, Mary," he used to tell her, "then you and I will have all his money, and we will live in New Orleans, where there are theaters."

One morning old Barton was found in his store, with his head nearly severed from his body.

The nephew, Harry Barton, and a negro slave belonging to the old gentleman, could not be found.

Mr. Barton had just been collecting his deb'ts, and apparently making arrangements for going to New Orleans for a new stock of goods, and it was supposed that he was murdered for his money.

The nephew and the negro could not be traced, and the mystery of the tragedy had never been explained.

Harry Barton was now in my company. Had he, at the age of sixteen years, committed that horrible crime, as many believed?

Circumstances were against him. For five years he had kept away from his early home; he was now the companion of bad men, and yet, as I gazed upon him, I could not believe that I was looking upon a man who had committed a cold-blooded murder for money.

The next morning I determined to have an understanding with Ruff, and commenced preparations for a journey.

When the old hunter saw the mule saddled, and that I was thinking about leaving him, he came up in a state of great excitement, and exclaimed:

"Why, Frank! what on airth do you mean by deserting me, and at such a time as this?"

"I think this *is* the time to leave you," I replied, "for you are in bad company, and I remember reading the fable about the dog, Tray. You are with thieves and murderers."

"Yes, I told you so, and we must stay with 'em, or they'll thieve and murder more. Haven't I told you what these fellers are gwine to do? Afore they start for Texas they're gwine to have a grand *raze* for money, horses and niggers, and cruel revenge."

Ruff was communicative now, and in the course of half an hour I learned from him that the company were to visit the neighborhood where my father resided, for the purpose of obtaining more property and some revenge. He told me that, many years before, Buck and Bill had both been lynched, tarred and feathered, and ridden on a rail by a mob of indignant planters, who assembled at old Barton's store. They had been horse-stealing, and committing other crimes, and were justly punished, and ordered to leave the State.

"They're gwine back," said Ruff, "to rob, burn, murder, and destroy all they can, and your father is one of the

principal men whom they are determined to kill. I've heard that beauty, Bill, swear a horrible oath that he'll kill your father with his own hands."

"Then why had we not better go to my home and warn the people of the danger threatening them?" I asked.

"No; that will not do, for they have already a little suspicion of me, and if we should leave 'em they'd know what for, and would kill us afore we could get thar. Besides, they have a friend living in the neighborhood—a man who sends word to 'em of all that happens. We don't know who the man is, and he would know that their plan is discovered. They would come some night when we were not watching. I've been thinkin' over the business night and day," continued Ruff, "and the surest plan to prevent mischief is to be with 'em. We shall know then what they are about. Should we leave, that Bill would be like a snake in the grass, unseen, or like a panther, crouching for a spring in a dark night. He is safest when I have an eye on him, and a rifle in my hand. I shall not do a murder, but depend on't, thar'll be a time come when I'll have to shoot that feller, Bill, and the people of Marion County will elect me a constable for it. But, Frank, we have got some terrible and cute work to do. These men are not to be easily beaten by us. I remember the time they were driven out of the clearin's. It took nearly all the planters for twenty miles around, and your father was one of the principal men in the hunt. Don't you remember it; you must have been about eight years old?"

"Yes, quite well. I thought that he had gone to a war, and was delighted to see him come back safe."

"Wall, Buck and Bill were two of the fellers run down and punished that day, and I believe they've thought about nothing but revenge ever since, and your father and Mr. Sheiby are the two men they are most determined to kill. Thar's nothin' to prevent 'em from destroyin' the whole neighborhood. They will come upon it in the night, when no one is prepared. They've got all the plans fixed—the road they are to take when they leave will be over Millard's Bridge, which they will burn, and horsemen followin' 'em will have to go ten miles round. They'll get clear off on to the prairie with all the horses and cattle they can find. They have made friends with a chief of an Osage tribe, and will

pass through his country, on the way to Texas. The chief will not let them be followed by anything less than three hundred men, for he's able to keep back any number less than that.

"Thar's one or two white men in the neighborhood, who'll help 'em, and your father has a darkey—'Lazy Joe.'"

"Yes, a bad, sulky, lazy fellow," I exclaimed.

"Exactly! Wall, Joe will hold a light, if wanted, for Bill to cut your father's throat. Now all what I tell you would be done, but for two reasons."

"What are they?" I asked.

"I'm one, and you're another."

Our conversation was interrupted by Buck, who gave orders that the camp should be broken up in preparation for a march.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAMP BROKEN UP.

The negroes, under the superintendence of one of the white men, were started off in advance of the others, with the horses and cattle.

From the accumulation of property moved from the camp, I saw that the leaders of the party had a strong regard for wealth as well as revenge.

Besides about three hundred cattle, there were nearly one hundred horses, which, I was told, were occasionally caught and used under the saddle.

Besides this stock, were several horses packed with skins and furs, which were too valuable to be left behind, although they would have to be carried many miles before they would reach a market. This trouble, however, was of very little consequence to our companions, for the horses that carried the "cargo" were going to the market also.

After the stock and negroes had been started off, a small *cache* was "sprung" and several bottles of whisky taken from it.

In Little Rock I had seen two or three boatman, on what they called a "bender."

Their actions were a little eccentric. One of them stood in the center of the street, and striking an attitude of Ajax defying the lightning, challenged "every man on earth, barrin' General Jackson," to fight. As the challenge was not accepted, he passed the remainder of the afternoon in expressing his contempt for human-nature in every shape—barring that of his favorite general.

Another boatman, every ten minutes, informed the people of the town, with horrible oaths, that he knew every bight and bend of the Arkansas and Mississippi, better than any other living man.

The third boatman was sentimental, and cried bitterly over the loss of a wife, that had left New-Orleans for heaven several years before.

These were the only drunken men I had ever seen, until my companions on the prairie began to give some evidence of the quality of the article they were drinking.

The men drank the whisky as though it was a matter of business, that should be accomplished as soon as possible, in order that they might start on their journey.

About three hours after the departure of the cattle, we mounted for a start.

At that moment, two of them got into a dispute as to which rode the fastest horse. This controversy was to be settled by a trial. The one which reached the cattle first was to be the victor, and both set off at full gallop.

Some of the others wished to see which won the race, and followed them at full speed. Ruff and I were left with Harry Barton, who had been drinking, but was not what could be called drunk. He did not know that I had recognized him, and thought himself safe.

"Ruff," said I, "this young fellow is named Barton. We were once well acquainted. He knows who I am."

"I don't believe it."

"Do you remember Old Barton, who was murdered for his money?"

"Yas! is this the nephew, who disappeared, and was never heard of?"

"Yes, and he remembers me."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, painfully sure."

"Then we'd better kill him. He'll betray us, and it's strange that he's not done it before. Let us first make sure that he knows you. This is an affair in which thar should be no mistake."

Under the circumstances in which we were now placed, it was difficult to understand how to act for the best.

It would not do to give Harry Barton a hint that he was known to us, for there was a possibility that he might not be certain of my identity, and I would only be betraying myself.

But should he be certain that I was Frank Rosebrook—the son of the man whom his companions were going to rob and murder—what could he intend doing?

He must know that I would prove a traitor to the expedition, and why did he not inform his companions that such was the case? He would be certain to do so, before we were many hours older, and how should we escape the rage of Buck, and the demon, Bill.

Harry Barton was either for or against us. If for us, why did he not make himself known?—If against us, why did he not tell his companions that we were deceiving them?

"Are you certain that he knows where we are going?" I asked.

"Yes," answered Ruff, "he knows all about that, for I've heard Buck speak of Barton's store, and Simm's tavern, when he was by."

"If we should accuse him of being Harry Barton, and ask him what he means, what would be the consequences?"

"We should only betray ourselves. He's ben one of the gang for years, and perhaps they know who he is, but have no fear of him. It is you and I, who have denied ever being on the Arkansas river, that they'd murder, if they larnt that we'd deceived 'em."

"But what shall we do?"

"Keep a sharp eye on that Harry, for he's more dangerous, at present, than Buck or Bill."

Ruff and I now rode on and overtook Harry, who, a little elated with whisky, was shouting a song to the tune of "The Arkansas Traveler."

"What are you fellows always holding a secret confab about?" he asked, as we rode up. "I don't like it; neither does Buck. Buck will not have it much

longer—neither will I. We don't want so much secret scheming."

Harry had drank just enough whisky to untie his tongue, and I was in hopes that he would show his true colors, which he did.

"I've been watching you for a day or two," said he to me, "just to see if I could learn your game. You are Frank Rosebrook. I knew you when you first came, but the lies of both of you will avail nothing. I'll have you both tried by a court-martial, and shot this evening. I'll save the company, and be the best man in it."

This was a rash, foolish speech, to make at that time and place. No other but a silly youth, under the influence of drink, would have made it.

"He must die afore he sees the others," exclaimed Ruff, in a hoarse whisper. "Now, Frank, do you ride straight on, and take no notice of me. You mind your own business, and overtake the others as soon as you can. Don't you turn your eyes towards me, if you don't want to see me do a holy action."

Harry had now quickened the pace of his horse, evidently with the intention of overtaking his companions. Ruff moved ahead of me, pursuing him.

Was it my duty to hasten the pace of the mule—keep up with my old companion, and prevent him from committing any act of violence, we might afterwards regret? If so, that duty was neglected. I was uncertain what to do, and my mind would not form a firm resolution. I rode slowly up a long ascent, and saw Ruff disappear over its summit.

The country, for some distance in advance, was what Western people call a "rolling plain," with here and there, groves of timber.

On reaching the top of the hill, I saw that the narrow vale below was better wooded than any other part of the road we had passed, and Ruff and Harry were concealed from my view. I rode on—mounted the ascent beyond, yet nothing of them could be seen.

About four miles further on, I overtook the negroes and cattle, at the place where I had camped with Buck and Bill, three days before. The cattle and horses were grazing, and the drunken men were lying under the shade of the trees near the river. Ruff and Harry were not with them.

CHAPTER X.

RUFF'S RETURN.

I turned the mule off to graze—quenched my thirst at the “branch,” and lying down under the shade of a cotton wood, tried to form an opinion on things in general. What had become of Ruff and Harry?

Had I done right in allowing them, under the circumstances, to disappear from my sight? These and many other questions were thorns in my mind, that kept me from indulging in a siesta, like the others around me.

After a brief slumber, the wolf-tooth Bill roused up, and asked me about Ruff.

“He’s gone after that young fellow, Harry.”

“Wall! whur’s Harry gone? Give an account of yourself. What does this hyur all mean?”

He spoke in a sharp, unpleasant tone, as though he hoped to find some cause for having a row with me.

“I’ve no account to give,” said I, “except that Harry started away from us, and that Ruff had some suspicion that he was going to take a short cut for Marion County, and went to bring him back.”

“Hyur, Buck! kim hyur,” exclaimed Bill. “Thur’s treason in the camp already.”

“What’s up?” asked Buck, as he drew near.

“Ruff thinks that Harry has taken a short cut to blow on us, and has gone after him.”

“Wall! that’s sothin’ to meadowtate on,” exclaimed Buck, after a short pause. “Why didn’t you go with him and learn the result?”

This inquiry was put to me.

“Because my mule was not willing,” I replied. “It don’t believe itself bound by nature to keep up with horseflesh. They rode out of my sight in the timber.”

Buck seemed satisfied with this answer, as far as I was concerned, and turning to Bill said, “I’ve allers had a

leetle suspicion of that fellow, and I hope that Ruff will bring back his heart."

"Yas, that would be convinsin' of one thing," answered Bill, "but I, for one, have allers had a *leetle* suspicion of Ruff. You know he once had some boughten tobacker, which he said was made in Missoory, and we both knew better. People should tell the truth, if they don't want to be thought cussed liars."

Artful as were these two villains, they were deceived by the story I had told them.

"I wonder if Harry thinks that by betraying us, he'll squar us for the past?" said Bill, as they were talking over his unexpected absence.

"Perhaps so," replied Buck, "I've often seen people that could only perform one yit. They was allers cowardly afterwards, and funky when called upon to do anything more. Thar's no dependin' on a man until he's drank blood several times. If Ruff brings back a good account of himself—all right: if not—what then?"

"Then he'd better not show up at all."

I believe that in this conversation they referred to the murder of old Barton, and that they knew Harry had something to do with that crime.

Not long after, I was delighted at seeing Old Ruff riding into camp. All gathered around him, and there was a general exclamation of, "Whar's Harry?"

"About twelve miles to the north-east, as nigh as I ken reckon," said Ruff, "but it mout be about thirteen miles, and a little east of north-east."

"How long do you think he's gwine to stop thar?" asked Buck.

"Until he's carrid away," replied Ruff, "and that will be by the varmints."

"Why! is he dead?"

"Dead? yas, of course he is. Hyar's his rifle."

"But some cussed fools ken part with their guns in a fight, and live for years afterwards," said Bill. "Why didn't you bring his head or pluck?"

"You have my word," replied Ruff, "and that's enough."

"Well! tell us all about it," said one of the men.

"You, see boys," continued Ruff, "that Harry has been tryin' in a sneakin' sort of a way, to set me agin our venture, so in order to larn for why, I humored him a little, and he proposed, this morning after we started, that we

strike across the country to Marion County, and give the people notice of who was comin'. He said they'd give us more than we could git by stayin'—that a good action sometimes paid better than a bad one. That sounded very pretty; but boys, Old Ruff is not the coon who ken ever betray his friends, unless sartin of makin' somethin', and I told him so. After that he was afraid to come amongst you agin. I tried my best to make him come back, but 'twas no use, and at last he bolted away, and I had to folly him. I called after him for mor'n two miles, in a quiet sort of way—then I threatened to shoot his hoss—then I threatened to shoot him, but 'twas all no use. I saw that he was determined to leave us all together, and I thought 'twas best to stop him. Was I right boys?"

"Yas! yas!! quite right," answered several.

"I fust shot the hoss—thinkin' that would bring him to reason, but it did'nt. He returned the shot, and the ball went threw my hat, and hyar's the place," continued Ruff, showing a round hole in the top of his tall felt hat. "Then both of us tried to see which could get the gun loaded the quickest. I never, on any occasion, allow myself to be beat at that, and 'twas'nt likely I was gwine to do it when I knew he might do some harm if I'd let him. Just as he was raisin' his rifle, I fired, and aimed at the third button of his shirt. I then hastened up—took his gun and came hyar."

"But what was Harry doin' when you left him?" asked Buck.

"Tryin' to stand on his head," answered Ruff, in a tone and manner that made my blood cold, and all the others laugh.

Every member of the company was indignant at the idea of a traitor having been found amongst them, and Ruff was raised by all for what he had done. Even the wolf-faced Bill seemed to have his suspicions allayed, and to regard Ruff as one of the most useful men of the company.

During the evening, Ruff managed to avoid me, although I gave him to understand that I wanted a talk with him.

I felt as though I could not sleep without learning whether he had killed Harry or not. I knew him to be an honest, kind-hearted man, but one, who in his zeal to do what was right, would commit a murder and think it no wrong.

During the evening Ruff, with Buck, Bill and two of the older members of the company, held a long consultation by themselves. In the meantime, I was waiting with the utmost impatience to learn the whole truth from the old companion who apparently had suddenly forgotten me.

Late that night one of the negroes, who was generally employed in looking after the horses, came up and spoke to me. As he held his hat in his hand, I saw that he was no longer young, for "the capillary substance on the summit of his cranium," was of a color worn by white sheep, instead of black ones.

"Mas'r" said the negro, addressing me. "Ken you tell me enything 'bout Mas'r Harry? I've hurn dat he's shot—dat he's gone dead. Do you tink it's troof?"

"I've heard so," I replied, "and I suppose there is some truth in the story, or Harry would be here."

"Dar's suthin' wrong Mas'r," continued the negro. "Mas'r Harry nebba start for home, and leab Ole Block."

"Who is Block?" I asked.

"Dat's me. When I was young, my head was hard, and I had no sense, and dey called me Blockhead. Now dey call me Block for short. Mas'r Harry almose my chile. I fed hum when he no bigger dan a possum, and when he walk on four legs like a little dunkey. I fotch-ed um up, and he nebba tink of gwine back to Marion without Ole Block. Dur's suthin' wrong."

"Very likely," I replied, "for I'm told that Harry has often done wrong, and——"

"Nebba!" exclaimed the negro, interrupting me, "Mas'r Harry got de right from Gor a mighty to do what he like. Ole Block is but a nigger, but s'elp um heving, he'll fine out all about Mas'r Harry."

The negro was showing the spirit of a man—something that I was not accustomed to witness in those days, and I ordered him off.

He went away muttering, and not being able to have a talk with Ruff, I passed a sleepless night.

CHAPTER XI.

MY FIRST AND LAST GRIZZLY.

At the first appearance of daylight the next morning, I saddled Pete, and rode down the stream to see if I could kill something for breakfast.

In preparing for a start, I made some disturbance, thinking if I should awaken Ruff he would accompany me, but in this hope I was disappointed.

I had passed plenty of game while riding over the ground a few days before, but I could see nothing worth a shot now. All the deer had fled from the neighborhood invaded by the herd of tamed cattle.

While riding along, with the rifle lightly grasped in one hand, the mule gave a sudden jump, nearly going from under me. So unexpected was this start, that I was only saved from being thrown by instinctively dropping the rifle, and grasping the pommel of the saddle.

On again becoming firmly established in the saddle, and gathering in the slack of the bridle reins, I turned my head to learn the cause of Pete's fright.

A large bear, with awkward strides and a rolling or swinging gait, was followed close behind the mule, which was struggling to increase the distance from the object of its terror.

The ground was very rough, being covered with large boulders, that prevented our making any distance in a straight line.

Snorting and roaring with rage, the bear scrambled after us, while Pete, without any urging, stumbled over the rocks at a pace that each moment threatened to break our necks.

I had dropped the rifle, and could not use my knife without giving the bear a chance of using its paws.

For a moment I believed myself to be perfectly helpless, and then the fact occurred to me that I was armed with a weapon that, in the hands of many men of the prairies, would prove effective under the difficulty I was in.

Coiled up on the pommel of the saddle was a lariat, used for tethering the mule. It was furnished with a loop, and was, in fact, a Mexican lasso.

Without fully comprehending what was to be gained by the feat, I seized the hight or loop with one hand, and the coils with the other, and, turning in the saddle, succeeded at the first effort in throwing the loop over the bear's head.

About fifty yards of open space or clear ground being before us, Pete gained a distance that drew the line "taut."

The instant the noose began to tighten around the bear's throat, it exhibited its reverse nature, by showing that it would not accept of any assistance in moving towards us.

It seized the lariat with its paws, and had there not been two or three close turns around the pommel of the saddle, it would have taken full possession of the line.

Such was the power and dexterity of the bear with the use of its paws, that the flight of Pete was suddenly checked.

It was not until then that I had a good view of the animal so determined to make a nearer acquaintance with me. It was not like any bear I had seen before, but much larger and more powerful. Its hair was longer, more shaggy, and mixed with gray. From what I had heard and read, I knew it to be a he-grizzly—the first one I had ever seen—the only one I had ever heard of in that part of the world.

Some strange fate had sent it from the Ozark Mountains to be an actor in the scene I am trying to describe.

Turning the head of the mule a little to the right, I gave it the spur, and bruin was once more brought upon all fours.

The pursuit and flight again commenced.

Once when we were chased from a piece of clear ground to a space covered with boulders, the mule was nearly caught. A fortunate incident alone prevented such a catastrophe.

The bear, when reaching forward one of its hind legs, put the paw down on the lariat and not far from its neck—as its head was near the ground.

This retarded its pace for a moment, and gave the mule time to recover the space it had lost.

I thought about dismounting, with the hope that the monster would have to follow Pete and allow me to escape.

This plan would have been put into immediate operation had I not at the instant it was formed, made the discovery that I was on a high and narrow neck of land, a promontory making a long, sharp bend in the stream.

There was hardly room for me to allow the grizzly to pass, had he turned his attention to me instead of the mule.

I saw that the chase would soon be over, for in about one hundred yards farther, the peninsula came to a point, and we would soon be driven over the steep bank.

There was but one object in view suggesting the slightest hope. It was a tree—a dwarf in height yet thick enough to bear a large horizontal branch about fifteen feet from the ground.

A flash of inspiration seemed to suggest a plan by which I might escape, and not one second was to be lost in acting upon it.

I took the turns of the lariat off the pommel of the saddle, and had just time to throw the coils over the projecting branch of the tree.

The end of the lariat fell down as I was passing under the branch, and I had to reach back with my left hand to seize it.

The bear was close upon us, and at each reach of its fore legs I was afraid that Pete might suddenly stop in his flight.

By the time I had taken two or three turns of the lariat around the pommel, the bear had got well under the branch.

It could go no further, for the slack of the lasso had run out, and the grizzly found himself standing on his hind legs, supported upright by a thong around his neck.

When Pete found that he could continue his flight no further, he turned sideways, and took an observation of what had happened.

The intelligent animal seemed to comprehend at a

glance the exact state of affairs, and never yielded one inch of the line in the struggle that now took place between the grizzly and itself.

I saw that the mule could be trusted alone, and after putting two half hitches of the lariat around the pummel, I dismounted.

The mule, leaning from the bear, added the greater part of the weight of its body against the efforts of the trangling animal to move.

In leaving this scene for a moment, I was obliged to pass close by the grizzly.

The froth from its foaming mouth flew over me, and I nearly fell over the bank in avoiding the blows of its long arms.

Losing not a second of time in the journey, I returned with the rifle. Watching for an opportunity, I put a ball into one of the animal's ears, and, as its struggles gradually ceased, Pete yielded enough of the line to allow it to fall upon the earth, dead.

Pete was not quite as sensible a creature as I once supposed him to be. He had tumbled over the brink onto me when in the river a few days before, and he was now guilty of the folly of being afraid of a dead grizzly.

I was nearly half an hour persuading the mule to pass by the body of the bear, and when, at last, I succeeded, the animal was as quick in performing the act as a Cherokee Indian gambler in making the knave take the ace in a game of all-fours.

CHAPTER XII.

"OLE BLOCK."

ON returning to the camp, I met the cattle and horses already on the way, and grazing as they were being driven slowly along. At the camp my companions were assembled in a group, and, on riding up, I saw that they were having an altercation with a negro.

It was "Ole Block," the man who had spoken to me the night before.

"I'm not gwyne with you!" exclaimed the negro, as I came near. "I b'longs to Mas'r Harry, and um gwine to fine him."

Let's make him go," said Ruff. "H'll be worth a hundred dollars in Texas, after helping to drive the cattle thar."

"Yes, let's yoke him with a bull," said another. "I reckon he'll travel some, then."

"I shall nebber go with you alive, s'elp me heving!" continued Block, protesting against the right of any one to control his actions. "If Mas'r Harry's gone dead, I'm free. I's been free a long time. Mas'r Harry's only my fr'en'."

"Stop his gab," cried another. "Gag him with a buffalo's skull. Make him chew a lime-stone quid."

A shower of blows then fell upon poor Block, but he still refused moving on with the others.

Many people believe that when an African shows the least opposition to the will of a white man, that he is only displaying the uneducated, obstinate animal nature of a brute, when the same spirit shown by a white man would be evidence of his claim to be called one of the lords of creation.

Block showed that he had a will of his own, and was

so stupidly obstinate as to contend, single-handed, against all the heartless men by whom he was surrounded.

I pressed forward into the crowd, wishing to assist him, but afraid to do so.

Whatever my human nature might dictate, early education and blind faith commanded me to be guided by Ruff, for I had not yet lost all confidence or belief in his infallibility.

I saw the demon, Bill, draw the ramrod from his rifle, and with it aim a blow at the venerable-looking head of the faithful negro.

At the same instant Old Ruff threatened to shoot Block unless he moved on, and the rifle, "Mary," was presented, as though the threat would be carried into immediate execution.

The blow of the ramrod fell upon the barrel of the gun, which I believed was placed to receive it, and I am now happy in recording that such was the case—Ruff himself since told me that he tried to save the negro from him.

"Old Block" broke from his tormentors and fled. Some tried to trip him up, some to hold him, and others to knock him down, but he cleared the lot and started north—towards the camp we had left the morning before.

Buck, Bill and two others mounted their horses, and rode after him at full speed.

I saw the negro ridden over—knocked down by the horses, and trampled under their feet.

I saw him beaten with the butt ends of rifles, and left for dead.

The horsemen returned, apparently pleased that one little difficulty, which had delayed their journey, had been overcome.

An ugly-looking cur, that had been assisting the negro in driving the cattle, now turned back.

It was a brute that had joined the company with Harry Barton and his black companion, and was now looking for its master, Block—having probably just discovered that that individual was not amongst the other drivers of the stock.

In passing by us it "sniffed" for a trail, found it, and struck off in the direction where "Old Block" was lying.

Its actions were discovered by Buck, who, unwilling

that the negro should have a companion—even that of a dog—brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

The dog, which was at the time about one hundred yards away, uttered a yell, picked up one of its legs, and continued its course on the other three. The company then started south.

I wished to turn back and see whether the negro was dead or not, but Ruff prevented me.

“Perhaps I’m on the wrong road,” said he, in a low voice, “but I’ll save our folk, if possible, when on the way. *Two of our enemies are gone*, but I was willing Block should live had he kept with us.”

He would not give me an opportunity of learning anything more, but left me and joined the others.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE WAY.

ABOUT two miles further down the river, I invited my companions to turn aside, and see my morning's work.

They all thought I had done well to slay a grizzly, under any circumstances, but when I explained to them the manner in which I had extricated myself from serious danger, and changed a retreat into a victory, all were loud in applauding me. It was the first grizzly bear that either of them had seen.

Before leaving the place, Ruff, in a low tone, told me to propose skinning the bear, and taking the hide with us.

"Why?" I asked, "we don't want it."

"Never mind," he replied, "do as I tell you."

"Who will help me take its hide off?" I inquired, addressing those around.

"What for? What do you want of it?" asked Buck.

"It will be worth five or ten dollars, if taken to a market."

"Yes, that's sartin, but it's not enough for the trouble. but I'm glad to see that you want to make money, and if you'll allers act as much like a man as you hev this morning, we'll show you how to get it. A smart plucky young chap like you, ken make money easier, than by toting green b'ar skins across the world."

I could now understand why Ruff told me to speak about the bear's hide. He wished his companions to think that I wanted money, and was willing to work for it. It was necessary for them to believe that I took an interest in the result of our expedition. I must have an object to be gained by joining in it, or, they would put no confidence in me.

Old Ruff was wiser than I, and I resolved to follow his wishes in all things.

During the ride that day, I had an opportunity of having a long talk with him, and the first thing I wished to know, was whether he had really killed Harry Barton.

"I don't know," he replied, when I asked him the question direct.

"Then you tried to kill him."

"No! not edzactly. I'll tell you how it was. When he said that he would tell Buck and Bill that we were deceivin' of 'em, and that you were Frank Rosebrook, I knowed that somethin' had got to be done. I could see that he meant mischief."

"I overtook him gwine down the hill. 'Harry,' said I, 'why do you want to die? You killed your uncle, old Barton, and now you want to have your old friend, Frank, murdered. What else but death do you expect to gain by that?' Just then we reached the bottom of the hill, whar the belt of timber was growing, and then we heard the sound of a gun, far off up the valley. I suppose Harry thought the company was in that direction, for he started off at full gallop, and I after him. We had a chase for about half a mile, when I caught up with him, and took hold of the bridle of his hoss. 'It's no use Harry,' said I. 'You're not gwine to make eny row in the camp, and you're a fool fur thinkin' that I'm gwine to let you. Stop and let's have a confab! I thought that some of the company were close by, and was determined that he should not speak to eny of 'em, until we'd had an understanding.

"It was no use trying to do enything with him, for he'd no sense. Fools allers get into difficulties some way or other, and Harry was a fool. He had no more sense then, than when he killed his uncle."

"Well! what happened?" I asked.

"Why he broke away from me, and afraid that he'd find Buck, I shot his hoss fust, as I have said. I told the truth in the camp, in everything except what Harry was shot for."

"But have you really killed him?"

"I don't know. He ran some distance before he fell, but did not appear to know what for."

"But why did'nt you find out whether he was mortally wounded or not?"

“What was the use? Hud I went up to him, and found that he was not dead, I could not have had the heart to finish him, nor could I have done anything for him. What’s done could not be helped. We’ve got a sartin duty to do, and we cannot be doin’ wrong in performing it. When I’m doin’ what I know to be right, sich bad things as Harry Barton, must not stand in my way. People who do eny good in this world have to do many things they don’t like, and people who do wrong, and those who have no sense, will have to put up with some trouble.”

There was to me something incomprehensibly strange in the conduct of Harry Barton.

Why had he murdered his uncle. The old gentleman was very kind to the youth, and denied him nothing. Avarice could not have instigated the crime, for Harry in some future day, would have had all, or the most of the old man’s property, much of which, after commission of the crime, he had been compelled to abandon. If the few hundred dollars of cash on hand, had tempted the youth to murder his uncle, why do he not go to New Orleans, or some other city, where the money might have been spent in those dissipations, to which so many weak-minded country youths aspire. When I joined the gang of villains, I was now with, why did he not inform them at first that I was deceiving them? Why did he take the silly plan that had brought upon him the fate he had met?

I asked Ruff if he could understand conduct so inconsistent with reason or common sense.

“Thar’s nothin’ strange about it,” he answered. “His actions was perfectly simple and natral.”

“Indeed; to me his conduct is most incomprehensible and unnatural.”

“That’s because you are like most other people in the world, who think they know somethin’. Because he has acted different from what you would have done, then you say, ‘how strange.’ When you see one man nigh on seven feet high, and another only four feet somethin’, why don’t you say, ‘how wonderful.’ The fact is, Frank, we’re not all built alike, cyther in mind or body. Harry Barton was a wicked fool, and if he’d acted like enything else, then you might have reason to say ‘how strange.’”

Old Ruff’s simple way of explaining what to me was a dark mystery, has since been of much use to me through

life. It taught me that in every attempt to reason, we can never reach the desired end. We must not judge of the acts of fools, as though they were those of sensible men, or they will appear very mysterious and incomprehensible.

That afternoon we saw a herd of deer feeding on the side of a hill far away. I started off with old Ruff, to try and kill one for our supper.

We were followed by Bill.

On arriving near the deer, we placed a clump of small trees between us and the herd, and rode within three hundred yards of them. Bill and Ruff then dismounted, and gave me the bridle reins of the horses to hold. I was "the boy," and consequently obliged to let them have their way.

They then "sneaked" forward, and soon after I heard the report of their rifles—one after the other. I rode forward leading their horses, and when I came up to them Bill was standing over a fine stag, dropped by a shot through the side, and struggling with death.

Drawing a large knife from its sheath, Bill seized the stag's head, and drew it far back—stretching the neck to the utmost. As the knife was buried in the stag's throat, a hideous smile came over the man's face. The wolf-tooth grew broader, longer and brighter, and I heard him utter the words:

"This is the way I'll serve old Rosebrook."

CHAPTER XIV.

DENMAN.

WITH the hope that I was not a coward, I was thankful for the fact that I had sufficient fear to prevent me from committing a crime—even when under strong excitement.

I heard and saw Bill as he gave an illustration of the manner he was going to kill my father.

The barrel of my rifle was placed on a level with the villain's head, but the trigger was not drawn. I was afraid—not of Bill—not of any physical harm, but I did not dare to blow the soul of a man into eternity without a moment's warning, while that man was helpless to protect himself, and with his eyes turned from me.

My father was far away, and not in immediate danger of the man before me, and something seemed to whisper the words, "not yet."

This command was backed by another from Ruff, who hastily stepped between us, and, as he did so, I read on his features the words, "not yet."

From that moment I knew that Bill's days were numbered, and that he would die by my hands—not for what he had already done, but I was certain that he would persevere in his evil intentions until he should be prevented from carrying them into execution.

His death was only a question of a few hours' time, and a strong controversy of opinion arose in my mind as to when that time should be.

I had a right to take his life in order to prevent him from committing the crime he contemplated, and I only waited for the moment when I could perform that duty without afterwards being condemned by conscience for doing a violent deed a few days or hours too soon. The time for me to act would be when the life of another was

in immediate danger. That time had not yet come.

We were not journeying straight towards my native county, but going further south, to strike a line leading from that county towards Texas.

After obtaining what property and revenge they could, the leaders of our party wished to start direct for the far-off land of their destination, and to meet the property already acquired, on their way.

I heard them around the camp-fire one evening talking over their plans.

"After we've got the cattle and horses safe under cover of the Sages," (Ossages), said Buck, "we'll take as little property into Marion County as possible, and come back with as much as we can."

"We must take nothing but what can travel fast," said one of the company. "I, for one, don't mean to be caught by a troop of planters. They've no mercy on a poor devil in distress."

"How do you know?" asked Buck.

"Because I met 'em in a rage once."

"Tell us all about it."

"Yes, yes, all about it!" echoed two or three more:

The person called upon was known to the company under the name of Denman.

He was a tall, thin man, with a serious-looking face, yet, was possessed of more wit and humor than any other man in the company.

The few words I heard him speak proved that he was better educated than either of the other associates, and I could see that he was a man who had lived much amongst "the busy haunts of men."

"I've got no love for planters," said Denman, as he commence his story, "and I've no objection to telling you why. I'm a queer man—a very queer man, and there are many things I dislike as well as planters. Now, I don't care anything about money.

"I never had a desire to save money, and since childhood ever spent every red cent as soon as I could, and yet I've always been getting into trouble for my haste in trying to obtain money.

"When I was a young man, and living Down-East, I was put in a place of business with a man who did not know what money was made for. He thought that it was to be hoarded up, instead of being used a circulating medium. I tried to teach him different, and was advised

to travel West. I've been moving West for the last twenty years—driven back by the persecutions of a greedy, avaricious, dollar-worshiping people. But this is not telling you about the planters.

“About three years ago I reached a small village in the interior of the State, and saw that it was a good location for business.

“Some people are always toiling and scheming for money, reputation, position in society, or some other selfish motive, but this was not the case with me when I took up my abode in that village. I was merely tired of traveling, and stopped to rest, but I was obliged to do something for a living.

“I saw there was a chance to run a bank in the place, there being only one established there, and banks, like lawyers, do not thrive well without a little opposition.

“With the assistance of a lawyer in the village, and two weak-minded planters in the neighborhood, the bank was soon organized. Our notes were larger than those of the opposition bank, and were pretty pictures to look at. Six female figures were represented upon them, with hardly a rag on. The notes, in bright blue letters, bore the words: “The Planter's Bank, of ———.” They flew beautifully, but, when they began to come back, there was not even a wild-cat skin in the bank to redeem them with. I did not exchange those beautiful notes for any other more valuable property, as some would have done, and when the smash came I was still a poor man, yet, many said that I had robbed them.

“The planters, for fifteen miles around, held a meeting, at which one of them made an eloquent speech. He said that whenever a publican, a grocer, a carpenter and blacksmith started in business for the benefit of themselves and the neighboring population, a parcel of thieves came to the place, called it a “flourishing village,” built offices, and commenced robbing all in the county, and as many as possible out of it. They passed a resolution for cleaning out the village.

“Two or three gamblers, who lived by winning money of the planter's sons at playing ‘Euchre’ and ‘Poker,’ a lawyer, an auctioneer and a Mormon preacher were told to leave, and, would you believe it? they said I must go too. I protested against this in the name of the American Eagle, and the ‘gridiron,’ but it was no use. When they found I would not travel on a hint, they made

me travel on a mule, with my face towards the tail."

"What do you expect to do when you get to Texas?" asked Buck, when Denman had finished his story.

"I don't know. It is too soon to think about that yet."

"You had better run a church, as you would call it."

"No, not in a new country, where people are poor and trying to rise in the world. A parson there has to fare hard like the rest of them. The way to work a congregation to advantage is to start a new sect where society has been established for some time—where hard-toiling fools have died and left rich widows, and where tradesmen are suffering for respectability. War or politics will be the best paying games in Texas."

"You're a man of some education," said Buck, "and I've often wondered why you joined such an ignorant pack of thieves and robbers as us."

"Because I wish to live where there is no money—where I cannot get into trouble. Now, I've been with you more than a year, and had I known that you had ten dollars in money in your pockets, I should have stolen it, purchased something of you with the money, stolen it again, and kept myself and the camp in a worry and commotion night and day about that ten dollars. Ten thousand people on an island by themselves, and having a circulating medium of ten red cents, will be eternally scheming, cheating, lying, thieving and murdering each other for a share of that paltry sum. Take the money from them and they will live happy."

"That's a fact," said Buck. "See what hundreds of crimes we are not guilty of because we have no money. We don't pick pockets, as they do in New Orleans, or use false weights or measures. We don't sell strong drink, to ruin our fellow-creatures. We are not lawyers, nor quack doctors. Thar's hendreds of crimes we don't commit."

"Thar, thar! that'll do," exclaimed Bill, "you're makin' me quite disgusted with our way of livin'."

CHAPTER XV

THE FEAST.

EIGHT days after leaving the camp, we reach a tribe, or part of a tribe of Ossage Indians.

Buck and Bill were acquainted with several of the principal men of the tribe, and also met with two white men, who were living with it.

The Indian, who seemed to be the highest in authority, was a tall, fine-looking fellow, whose only article of dress was a superfine black cloth frock coat, which he informed us was a present from his friend, Colonel Yell. This gentleman who called himself General Pike, had not the slightest doubt of his being one of the most important men in the world. He had heard of President Jackson, whom he acknowledge to be first. Colonel Yell was also something to the world, but neither of these men were of so much importance amongst the Ossages as himself, and General Pike respected himself accordingly. Buck and Bill he only recognized as hunters and trappers, and treated them with a familiar patronizing way that must have made them quite proud of themselves.

The two white men in the tribe, were two of the most dirty, lazy wretches ever seen, and I formed a very contemptible opinion of the tribe, for allowing such worthless creatures to remain unchanged amongst them.

They were despised by the Indian men of the camp, and were only treated well by the dogs, and some of the squaws. Because they were following no occupation for a living, they seemed to fancy themselves as respectable as the Indians. As though related to a royal family, they were quartered on the nation, and kept out of charity, having too little of the proper spirit of men, to take care of themselves.

As in all similar cases, they were conceited and arrogant in proportion to their worthlessness.

After treating us to a little *negect*, the two came up and demanded some tobacco.

"Don't have anything to say to them," said Denman, "for if we treat them half as well as we do the dogs about the camp, the copper hides will think us no better than they are, and will treat us no better."

"That's so," replied Buck, "for they're only varmints—skunks—the meanest cusses that ever walked on two legs."

"Be off with you," cried Buck, turning to the two men. "What business have sneaks like you with ter-backer? It was made for men—not for skunks."

The two men slunk back a few paces, like beaten hounds.

"Look at 'em," said Bill, "don't they look as though natur was ashamed of 'em?"

General Pike and his followers, had the wisdom to know that we had not sought them without the intention of gaining something by doing so, and were all determined to profit by the occasion.

The general gave instructions that we should be entertained with a dinner. We were invited to partake of the hospitality of the nation—an invitation we were obliged to accept by giving two cattle for the feast.

The cattle were killed—several fires were lighted, and the feast commenced.

There were on an average of two women to one man—six children to every wife, and three half starved dogs to every man, woman, and child in the camp.

The bones of the cattle were passed from the men to the women—from the women to the children, and from them to the dogs, and after having been the round of the camp, they were seen shining on the plain, bright and white as an ivory cross, suspended on the bare bosom of a negress.

The two white men living with the tribe, participated in the feast along with some of the favorite dogs, and a few of the most abandoned women. They took what was thrown to them.

A bottle or two of whisky had been reserved for the occasion, and was shared between General Pike, Buck, Bill and Denman—the General taking either the lion, or

donky's share, which in either case was much the largest.

Before the evening was over he was in excellent humor, and expressed the hope that we might often partake of his hospitality.

Late in the evening there was a misunderstanding between the chief and some male relative of his principal wife.

Like many people who have risen to some importance in Europe, the chief had not acquired his eminence by heroic deeds of arms—by statesmanship or any other qualities that exhibit a display of genius—he had arrived at greatness by marrying—a simple method; but one that genious abhors.

There was a male relative of the wife who felt himself aggrieved by having been supplanted in power by another.

He had long been on the verge of rebellion, and on the night of our visit he fell over it, and there was a civil war between two. I saw the beginning of the war, and its decisive combat. It commenced with words, and raged for sometime with merciless and terrific force.

So much natural eloquence have the red-men of the prairies, that, without knowing their language, I could understand the meaning of nearly all they said.

In this wrangle I first learnt to fully comprehend the superiority of my mother tongue over other languages.

Whenever either of the combatants wished to use profane or obscene language, they spoke English. They had to swear in English or swear not at all.

I could understand that appeals were made to little and great spirits. Similis were used uniting and comparing all that was great and beautiful, little and evil, above and below, with each other, but no satisfactory understanding could be reached. The animosity was too great, and the points of misunderstanding of too much importance to be settled by words alone, and they came to more active warfare.

In his communications with white men, General Pike had learnt that a bowie knife was an indispensable article for a gentleman to carry. He had probably heard that no man on the borders was not fully dressed without one.

Gracefully raising his right hand, and placing it under the collar of his coat at the back of his neck, he with-

drew it, grasping a No. 2 knife, the weight of which is two and a half pounds.

His opponent was, for an Indian, very short and stout, and had heavy arms, that evidently possessed great strength.

He retreated before the knife, but only a few inches beyond its reach, apparently undecided how to act.

He had a confederate or friend—one who would not see him retreating unarmed before his rival, and handed him a bow and arrow. While the latter was placed to the string, the former was raised on a level with his face.

The long, strong bow was bent until the two ends were not more than half the distance apart they were when it was placed in his hands. At that moment the string snapped, and nearly at the same instant the bow dropped to the earth—the feathered or beam end of the arrow was buried in the socket of one of the Indian's eyes.

The weapon had been awkwardly handled by the strong arm of one who, while determined on taking a deadly aim, had moved the arrow the wrong way. The powerful arm had done its work too well.

General Pike discontinued his assault, and with a hideous smile on his features, saw the arrow withdrawn from the sightless eye of his wounded rival.

The man must have suffered intense agony, but he bore it with fortitude and calmness that astonished every white man present. Like others of his race, he did not become frantic either with rage or pain, as most white men would do.

He had been defeated by his own carelessness or folly, and submitted to fate with the composure and dignity that only the most noble by nature can exhibit.

I was expecting to see the chief show a little of that ruthless and revengeful spirit the Indians are said to possess, but he did not. Perhaps he knew that his rival was suffering much agony from the result of the conflict, and, pleased with this knowledge, was satisfied for the time.

This encounter ended the feast, and each of us retired to his blankets.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SEPARATION.

DURING the absence of the party on the expedition to Marion County, two white men, with all the negroes but one, were to be left in charge of the cattle on the plains.

It was unanimously decided that one of the men left in care of the negroes and cattle, should be either Buck, Bill, Ruff or Denman.

Buck and Bill, both declared that they could not think of stopping. They were going to Marion County after revenge as well as property, and they could not trust their business to others. They preferred leaving Ruff in care of the property left behind to any other man of the company, but Ruff swore, as no other man could swear, that he would go in the expedition.

Denman consented to stop if all the others were agreeable.

"I care nothing about your revenge," said he, "and in fact I want nothing to do with it. I am going to Texas, and want some company on the road and a little property to start with when I get there, and I'll take good care of the niggers and cattle, while you are gone. I only want a share of the property you bring back, and not the trouble of getting it."

His offer was accepted, and the next business to be settled was that of deciding on who should stop with him.

No other person volunteered to stop with them, all emphatically declaring that they would go in the expedition to Marion County.

"Let me settle this affair," said Buck, "now hyur's Mr. Frank Jones," he continued, turning to me, "he's but lately joined us, and as he'll expect to share in all the plunder, he should try to be agreeable in order to earn

his whack. I propose that he stops with Denman. What do you say, Ruff, aren't that far?"

"Yes, quite fa'r," answered the old hunter who knew that I would never consent to stay.

All eyes were turned towards me.

"Ruff," said I, addressing my old companion, "I've traveled more than three hundred miles to find you, and I'm not going to lose you now. Where you go, I do."

"We have all got to be guided by some fair law," said Denman, "and I'll tell you how this dispute can be settled without any one having the slightest cause of complaint. It is acknowledged by all, that Buck, Bill, Ruff and myself, may go or stay as we chose. I have chosen to stay, and let the others decide by lot, as to which shall stay with me."

Every one declared that this arrangement was "fa'r," and Ruff and I were obliged to agree with them.

Denman undertook to manage the lottery, and placed as many linden leaves in his hat as there were persons to stand a chance in the result. On one of the leaves was faintly scratched the letter "S" for stop.

I was the second one who put a hand in the hat to draw out a leaf, and the one I abstracted was the fatal letter.

I was to stay with Denman. Had Ruff and I shown any firm resolution to counteract this decision, we would have incurred the suspicion of all the company. Not one of the others would have made the slightest objection to staying after the decision that had been made, neither must I.

All business was considered as settled, and preparations were immediately commenced for the departure of the expedition, which was to start early the next morning.

During the evening Ruff found an opportunity of whispering a few words to me.

"Of course you're not gwine to stop hyar until they kim bark," said he, "for you now understand what's to be did as well as I do, and have a most as much sense to guide yourself. You must overtake us afore we get to Marion County, pass us unseen, and get home first. How you are to do it, and how you are to help me, I leave to you. My advice is wuth nothin', for you'll have to act accordin' to sarcumstances. Don't stay with Denman to long, only for a few hours, for we shall travel fast for it."

This was the only instructions I received from Ruff for early the next morning the party left for my childhood's home on a murderous errand; and at the same time accompanied by Denman, I followed the negroes who were driving the stock onto a prairie one day's march beyond the Ossage camp. I was deserting my family—leaving it to the care of Fate and old Ruff, but what was to be done? The least hesitation on my part, at present, and Ruff and I might be killed.

During our day's march with the cattle, my thoughts were anything but pleasant.

A company of blood-thirsty, murderous, theiving wretches were traveling towards my home where all that was near and dear to me were living. They were going for the express purpose of murdering and plundering my people, and I was moving away from them.

It was true Old Ruff was with them, and he could be trusted for all that one man could possibly do in a good cause, but after hearing what Bill had said on cutting the throat of the stag, I could not place my hope on one alone. There were many ways how accidents might happen preventing Ruff from doing as he might wish.

Instinct, duty, inclination, everything commanded me to leave Denman and follow the party who had gone to the "settlements." I wished to turn back that day, but should I do so, Denman might also overtake the party to see whether I joined it or not. Should I start the next morning, the party would be nearly two days march ahead of me, and I would have no time to lose in overtaking it before the scoundrels reached the vicinity of my home.

I could not possibly wait longer than the next morning, but how should I then escape from Denman? Would he oppose my leaving him with the same murderous determination that I would be sure to meet with Buck or Bill?

Should I abscond from him, would he leave all, pursue and overtake the party, perhaps before me? These and a thousand other questions crossed my weary mind, nearly driving me distracted.

Whatever might be the result of the effort to once more place myself in the vicinity of Bill, it must be made, and that immediately.

Already conscience and fear began to torture me for

having lost sight of the ruffian who had sworn to murder my relations.

In the evening we reached the banks of a small stream, on which I was told we were to camp until the return of our companions.

Early the next morning I arose, determined to leave Denman peacefully if I could, forcibly if I must. Something told me that I had done wrong in coming with him thus far, but Ruff and I were acting under peculiar circumstances. Had I refused to obey the decision of the party, suspicions might have been excited that might have led to the discovery of my being a native of Marion County.

Such a discovery would have led to the destruction of our dearest hopes, and probably to Ruff and I being shot.

CHAPTER XVII.

I COMMENCE A JOURNEY ALONE.

BEFORE sunrise the next morning the negroes were started off on the plain, to look after the cattle, and I was left with Denman.

"I expect the boys will have a fine lot of plunder when they come back," said he, "but it will be hard work for us to stop here for two weeks waiting for them."

"It will, indeed," I replied, pleased that he had broached the subject on which I was anxious to speak, "and I have strong doubts as to whether my patience can endure so long."

"Why, you don't think of leaving me, do you?" he asked, with an expression of great surprise.

I summoned all my resolution, and prepared for a scene.

A sleepless night passed in meditating on the danger that threatened my home, had made me impatient to be off, and I was determined to start that morning.

I first saw that my knife was in the sheath by my side, and then carelessly placed my hand on the rifle, fully resolved that should a war arise between us, I should lose no advantage through not being ready.

"I certainly do," I replied, in answer to his question. "I'm going to leave you this morning—being determined to cut all connection with the villains who left us yesterday."

Denman, who was sitting by the fire, sprang to his feet, and advanced towards me.

"Hold!" I exclaimed, stepping back, and bringing my rifle to my shoulder.

"Hold yourself," he replied, as a broad smile broke over his features, "and don't be a fool, but give me your hand. You've expressed my sentiments exactly. While they are traveling one way, let us move the other. We can reach Texas a month before them, and take all the property with us. Let us start immediately."

"No, I'm far enough south," I answered. "I'm tired of a life on the prairies, and shall go back to Missouri."

"I believe you intend following your old friend, Ruff," said Denman, and, as he spoke, a strange and disagreeable expression came over his face. "If I thought that, you should not leave the place alive, for I have said too much."

I told him that had I been allowed to accompany the party, I should have done so until I got near the settlements, and no further, and that I should be afraid to join them now.

"I don't know whether it will make much odds to me whether you do or not," he replied, after a moment's pause, "for I shall have a good two weeks' start, and Buck will blame you for leaving me, quite as much as he can me for not waiting. Run after them and say that I have turned traitor, if you dare."

In less than half an hour I was ready for a start. There were plenty of horses in the drove that should have been able to perform a long and rapid journey in less time than Pete, but though fully believing that time was as valuable to me as life itself, I would not leave the mule. For the reason that I had a difficult feat to perform, I required the assistance of an animal of whose qualities I was certain—one upon whom I could depend for doing something.

Pete was now like an old friend, and I determined that we should work together in my efforts to save my family.

As I was about to start, a row took place between Denman and one of the negroes—a young black whom Buck had a year before persuaded to abscond from his servitude on a plantation, and live an idle life on the prairies.

I had noticed that Buck had ever spoken to the young darky in a pleasant tone—that he sometimes gave him a drink of whisky, and at other times a pipe of tobacco.

"Frank!" exclaimed Denman, appealing to me, "this

young bull African refuses to move on with the cattle. What shall I do with him?"

"Yes, Mas'r Frank," said the negro, whose name was Sam, "you knows Mas'r Buck say we stop heah till he come, and why for we go on to Texas and leab him?"

"Then I shall go there, and 'leab' your black carcass here," replied Denman, "and I'm not going to give you much time to decide as to which it shall be."

From the appearance of the other negroes they seemed quite willing to move on at once.

They had been promised their freedom in Texas, and were quite willing to go and take it without any further delay.

Two of them were busy packing up the cooking utensils and other camp furniture, and the others were starting off the herd in a southwest direction.

I waited a few minutes to see how the dispute between Denman and the negro would end.

Sam objected to the cattle being driven away, and declared that they were partly the property of his master, whose rights he was left to protect.

He appealed to the other negroes to assist him, but they paid no attention to his entreaties.

Undoubtedly they preferred starting for Texas under one master, than to be bullied on the way by half a dozen, and instinct would teach the most of them to prefer Denman for a master to Buck and Bill.

Denman at last got in a rage, and proceeded to violence.

He picked up a stick, and commenced beating Sam over the shoulders, and ordering him to move on with the others.

Common sense told him that unless he proved victorious now, he would never succeed in governing the others through a long journey. Sam must either be conquered, or killed.

After receiving three or four blows, Sam made a rush for Denman's rifle, which was leaning against a tree.

The gun was seized, and presented towards its owner.

"Top, Mas'r Denman!" yelled Sam, "or by the Gor A'mighty I shoot you."

There was something in the negro's tone and manner that showed him to be in earnest. Denman could see this, and wisely halted. He was no coward, but he be-

lieved that a negro, acting under the influence of that spirit which the planters call "obstinacy," when found in blacks, can sometimes act like a man.

"Frank!" exclaimed Denman, "give me your rifle."

Had I complied with this demand, he would not have made the slightest hesitation in shooting the negro, who was resisting his authority.

I did not wish to see an act like that, and refused to let him have the gun.

When the row between Denman and Sam commenced, I had already mounted the mule for a start, and as I saw the former rushing towards me, evidently for the purpose of seizing my rifle, I gave Pete a taste of the spurs, and my journey commenced.

While listening to the controversy between them, I was reflecting at the same time on the fact that Buck and Bill would have two days the start of me in the race for Marion County.

I was impatient to be off, and the curiosity to learn the termination of the dispute was conquered by the knowledge that one minute's unnecessary delay might be the cause of my suffering life-long regret.

The last I saw of Denman he was shaking his fist at me as I rode away, and the last I heard of his noise was a horrible oath in cursing me for deserting him.

I did not stay to learn how the dispute with Sam ended. Curiosity was conquered by duty. Denman's schemes and difficulties, and Sam's dog-like fidelity to Buck was nothing to me. My business was to reach Marion County as soon as possible. Pete's opinion on the business of the hour was apparently in accordance with mine, and the camp and its unhappy inmates were soon left far from sight.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO "VARMINTS."

OUR march with the cattle the day before had been very slow, and a little before noon on the day of my departure from Denman, I found myself in the neighborhood of the Ossages.

Not thinking it prudent for me to attempt passing through the camp alone, I turned to the right to describe a half circle and go around it.

I had bright hopes of getting ten or fifteen miles beyond the Ossage camp that afternoon, and gain that distance in the time that I had lost by being unfortunately chosen in the lottery as the companion of Denman.

At a time which I judged to be about three o'clock in the afternoon, I reached a grove by a small rill, and resolved to give Pete a rest and a feed, as some preparation for a long ride in the cool of the evening.

I tethered the mule in a place where the grass had risen with a rapid growth and was fresh and tender, and then sought for "forty winks," in the shade of the grove. I was not afraid of sleeping too long, for the mental anxiety which was upon me was too strong for that.

When I began to awaken, I was suddenly aroused by a human voice,

The words, "look out Abel—don't let him git up,"

fell upon my ears in the most abominable twang ever heard.

The tone in which the words were uttered, expressed ignorance, fear, all, and everything that we hate.

I rose to a sitting posture, and saw before me the two wretches whom I had seen two days before at the Indian camp.

"Now is your time, Abel," said the "varmint" who had first spoken. "Don't let him get up. Keep him down. I'd shoot him."

I saw that before disturbing me, the two cowardly wretches had taken possession of my rifle and knife.

They were both armed, and I was wholly at their mercy. I knew that they were bad men—that no moral feeling could restrain them from any crime that avarice or other evil propensities might dictate.

There was, however, one source of hope. As I turned my eyes from one to another, I saw that, notwithstanding my helpless condition, they were afraid of me. They were more frightened than I was.

The mule and its trappings—my rifle and other property were valuable prizes to worthless objects like them—prizes for which they would not have hesitated in giving me a dose of poison, but they had not the courage to see my blood flowing. They dared not to lift a hand at me while I was looking at them.

"You tie his hands, Ephe," said the one with the gun, "and if he don't let you do it quietly, I'll shoot him."

Ephe went where the saddle and my bundle were lying—took the leather thong that held my blanket in a roll, and then advanced towards me.

My inactivity was giving them confidence. Though quite sure that they had not the courage to kill me outright, I believe that they would let me starve to death, tied to a tree, should I allow them to do so.

I had the most fear of Abel with the gun, for he was trembling so much that I was afraid, should he place a finger on the trigger, he might do me some harm. He came nearer, and covering my head with the muzzle of the rifle, in a trembling voice ordered me to remain quiet.

Ephe then attempted to seize one of my hands. At that instant I made the discovery that the hammer of the rifle was not on full cock, and I sprang upwards and seized the barrel pointed towards me.

I had just succeeded in getting possession of the gun, when, from some unseen hand, came a blow that seemed to smash my head like a fallen egg, and all my knowledge of what was going on around me, suddenly departed.

On regaining my senses, I found myself lying in a hut at the Ossage camp, where I had been two days before.

I afterwards learned that while insensible, I had lain across the mule's back, and brought into the village by two squaws. One of them had knocked me down with a big stick to prevent me from killing the two white brutes, one of whom was living under her protection.

Instead of killing me as they were ordered to do by the men, the squaws took me and my property to General Pike.

The sun was just setting, when I came again into possession of a memory, and I must have been more than two hours insensible.

Some children gave me a calabash of water, and something resembling bread, which I believe was made of acorns.

While partaking of this repast, I was visited by Abel and Ephe, the two "varmint."

"I say, Mister, I reckon you've had a putty narrer escape," said Ephe. "If it hadn't ben for my friend, Abel, partly assisted by me, them she devils would have killed you, sartin."

"Yes, Ephe and I had hard work to pectect you agin 'em," said the other. "My friend Ephe here is one of the best fellows in the world. He won't harm a mosquitor."

"No nyther would Abel," said Ephe, "for he's one of the kindest men that ever lived. He's ben prayin' to General Pike to spare you ever since we made the women bring you in. We found you a sneaking around the camp instead of coming into it. That looked bad, and yet we didn't try for to harm you."

"You are two miserable, cowardly wretches," I exclaimed, and I don't want anything to say to you."

"Now that's what I call uncommon unkind," said Ephe. "How different a good noble-hearted man would act. If you was generous and grateful as you should be, and knowing all we have done for you, I'm sure you'd give Abel your rifle."

"And if you knew how hard Ephe fought to save yo

from those mad squaws," said Abel, "you'd give him your mule and saddle. I know you would. My poor father (heaven bless his soul) used to say there was no crime so base as that of ingratitude."

Never before meeting these men had I come across anything that so suddenly and thoroughly aroused my hatred.

Without seeing them, I could not have believed that there existed creatures so vile.

They were annoying me.

In truth the very sight of such wretches, or the voice of either, was quite sufficient to drive me with my aching head into a raging fever.

By the whining, begging manner in which they had come to me, I knew that I was no longer in their power; that they could neither steal from, or rob me.

This being the case, I would not let them annoy me.

On lifting my head from the earth in trying to rise, I was astonished at the fancy that its size could not be much less than a load of hay, and that its weight was too great for me to carry about.

The two "varmint" on seeing me trying to rise, stepped back, but when my head fell to the earth, they smiled and came forward.

In the weak and wounded state I was in, they would certainly have driven me mad, had not General Pike come to my aid.

On seeing him approaching, both attempted to sneak away, but I was pleased to see that the mild and gentle Abel did not succeed in doing so without taking away a mark of the general's displeasure, in shape of a cut across the forehead, with the back of the bowie knife I have before mentioned.

The general could speak a little English, and in a stern manner wished to know why I had deserted the duty to which I had been appointed by his friend Buck.

I told him that the other man and the negroes had disobeyed instructions, and were driving away the cattle where Buck could not find them, and that I was hastening to Buck to let him know the news.

This satisfied him, and he gave me to understand that as I had partaken of his hospitality but a short time before, I was free to go now—that it was contrary to his principles to feed a man one day and rob him the next.

He told me that all my property should be restored to me, and that I could leave when I pleased.

He then asked me, in a confidential tone, if it was true that I had started on a long, rapid journey without any whisky or tobacco.

I told him that I never used either, and with an expression of intense disgust on his features, the general left me.

CHAPTER XIX.

S A M.

My anxiety to start again on the road was so great, that I believe it had much to do in keeping me too ill to move until the afternoon of the next day.

Several times I got up with the hope that I might be able to resume my journey, but after getting onto my feet, my head seemed a satellite of the earth revolving rapidly around it, and I was obliged to lie down again.

It was not until twenty-four hours after receiving the blow from the squaw, that I could trust myself on the back of the mule.

When I was preparing to start, the two "sneaks" were present with most of the tribe, that turned out of their huts to witness my departure.

"Look at him Ephe," said the gentle Abel, pointing with one of his dirty hands towards me. "'A'int he a mean cuss? He's not worth a chor of terbacker."

"I've hearn that a squaw whipped him in a fair fight," said Ephe.

Had I not been conquered by a squaw, I should have disarmed and killed the pair of them, yet they could jeer me for want of manliness.

They were unworthy of an answer, and without making them any reply, I once more commenced my journey towards home.

The full moon arose as the sun went down, and I made

a distance of about twenty-four miles that night before camping.

After tethering the mule, and building a large fire, I ate a piece of jerked vension, and laid down with the determination of starting again by the first appearance of dawn.

I had but very little sleep the night before, and feeling still rather dull and stupid from the effects of the blow given by the squaw, I fell into a profound slumber, and did not awaken until the sun was more than two hours high the next morning. I had lost nearly three hours of the best part of the day for traveling.

I was ashamed of myself. My anxiety to aid my family seemed all a sham. It could not keep me from sleeping longer in the morning than any honest man should do.

I was constantly losing time, through my own folly and stupidity, and my annoyance at this made me guilty of another folly. During the day I strove to make Pete, by his exertions, atone for my neglect.

So little mercy had I on the poor brute, that before sunset it was quite done up, and I was obliged to stop.

That night I finished my sleep early, and was impatiently waiting for a little more light, to enable me to commence my journey.

I was lying with my face towards the mule, which, although about ten yards away, could only be faintly seen through the mist of the night.

I had heard it for some time cropping the grass, and then noticed that this sound was growing less distinct. The animal also appeared to be slowly moving farther away.

It was certainly becoming less distinct to my view—either for the reason that its distance from me was increasing, or because the night was becoming darker.

I watched the slowly-fading form of the mule, until I was certain that it had drawn the peg by which the lariat was fastened, and was slowly moving off.

Not wishing to lose even one minute in looking for the mule in the morning, I rose up and started to make it again secure. I had moved away three or four paces, when I remembered a little piece of advice often given me by old Ruff.

"Frank," the old hunter would say, "When you're out in the woods, or on the prairies, never move away from your shooting iron. Allers keep it within your reach."

I turned around—picked up the gun, and again started after the mule. When about fifteen paces from it, a man suddenly rose from the earth, and leaped onto the mule's back. He had "sneaked" up, untethered the mule, and was leading it away, crawling on the ground, when I had been discovered.

He was now making a bold attempt to rob me of the only means by which I could reach Marion County, in time to be of any use there.

The night was too dark for me to draw a fine sight, but there was a chance to save the mule, and hastily throwing the rifle to my shoulder, I fired.

The man fell headlong to the earth, and Pete, after running for a few yards, stopped, and turned to take an observation.

My first work was to step behind a tree, and reload the rifle.

Indian horse-thieves always have companions lying in wait to assist them. I thought of poisoned arrows, and for awhile was expecting to hear a shower of them falling around me, but not a sound could be heard, except that of Pete, who, having satisfied himself that all was right, was munching the grass.

Half an hour later the light of day began to appear in the east, and I made preparations for resuming my journey.

As day dawned, I went to see the person I had tumbled from the mule, an hour before.

On reaching the body, I was somewhat surprised to see that it was not that of a red Indian, but of a young negro. The ball had entered the left breast, a little below the heart, and passed through the body. I then recognized Sam, the young black I had left quarrelling with Denman.

He had undoubtedly been on his way to join Buck, and having come across my camp, could not lose the opportunity of taking the mule to assist him on the remainder of his journey.

Lying on the ground near by was Denman's rifle, which Sam had brought away with him,

I picked it up, and was turning to leave, when I saw the negro's eyes gazing upon me.

They had been closed when I looked at him a minute before.

"Mas'r Frank," said he, in a faint voice, as I hastened to his side. "I didn't know 'twas you, or I should'nt have played possum, and made believe I'm dead. I'm gwine to die putty soon, Mas'r Frank, but nebba mine. I doan blame you at all. Dis sarves me right."

I tried to express my regret for what had happened, but Sam would not listen to me.

He was a strong-minded youth, and was determined to have his own way as much as possible, even while dying.

The fact that, for about an hour, he had remained within a few feet of me mortally wounded and dying, without my having heard the slightest complaint, proved that he was no ordinary person.

"Now dar's dat gun, of Mas'r Denman's," said he; "I didn't car about stealin' dat. 'Taint no good to me no-how, but you see I could'nt guv it to him, caused he'd shoot me, so I had to totch it away."

I was nearly frantic with impatience to once more get on the way. Sam had started after, and overtaken me on foot. The reflection was anything but pleasant.

"Sam," said I, "don't you think you could ride on the mule?"

"Lor bless yer soul, no Mas'r Frank, he answered, "I's dyin,' I can't crawl, or you'd not have seen me here."

"How long do you think you are going to live?"

"About two hours. I die afore noon fer sartin."

"Then I must leave you."

"Yes! ob course," said the negro. "Why you stop heah? I can die alone just as well. Is you gwine to see Mas'r Buck?"

"Yes, I want to see him as soon as possible."

"I wish Mas'r Frank, you'd tell Buck dat I was shot for mule stealin'."

"Why?"

"Cos then he'd know I died of doin' my duty. I tink now mas'r Frank you bess be gwine, and let me alone, for I's gittin' wuss."

"All right Sam," said I; "good bye."

Under ordinary circumstances, I would have suffered many hardships, and sacrificed many dear hopes, rather

than have deserted a dying fellow creature, but conscience and duty left me no two courses of conduct. My only business was to get to Marion County as soon as possible.

Sam was a noble specimen of the American negro. He was humorous, musical, brave and faithful to those he professed to serve.

It was a cruel necessity that compelled me to leave him to die alone, but it was one I was obliged to obey.

I now began fully to realize the folly I had committed in remaining so long with Denman. I had not made any allowance for the least delay in my journey, and as a punishment for that want of foresight, I must now suffer a long and agonizing struggle, and then perhaps reach home too late.

A RACE AGAINST TIME.

CHAPTER XX.

A RACE AGAINST TIME.

ON the day of leaving Sam I made a long distance, and camped about ten o'clock at night by the side of a small "branch," where I slept till morning, without being disturbed.

The next day, about twelve, I was agreeably surprised at coming across a small party of white men.

They were a surveying party, employed by "Uncle Sam" in laying out the land into ranges and sections, previous to its being opened for selection or sale.

I learned from them that about five miles due north a party of six horsemen had passed them in the afternoon of the day before. From the account they gave, I knew the party to be Buck and his companions, and from the number I also knew that Rufi was still with the company.

They were not quite a day's journey ahead of me.

That night I rode on until nearly midnight, when Pete showed a disinclination to proceed any further.

Early in the morning I again started, and about ten o'clock reached a "branch," on the banks of which several people—the most of them negroes—were working.

Some one had selected the place as the site of a plan-

tation, and the negroes were making fences and ploughing the land, while some white carpenters were building a house for the proprietor.

At this place I was entertained with some hominy—an article of food for which I had been suffering ever since I left Little Rock. I also learned there that my home was about one hundred miles away.

Pete was also well entertained, and given a good feed of oats, seasoned with salt.

In the afternoon and evening I rode about twenty-five miles, and was on the road before sunrise the next morning.

That day I expected either to pass or overtake the party that had left me a few days before.

Following the advice of the overseer at the plantation, I had left the river road, and was saving several miles by crossing a large, barren plain, around which the river made a great bend.

If Buck and Bill crossed the plain also, I might fall in with them sometime in the afternoon. If they followed the river, I should not see them until our arrival in the neighborhood where my parents resided.

In the afternoon, when crossing a ravine, used by nature as a water-course after a heavy rain, I saw the tracks of several horse in the soft ground at the bottom.

The tracks had not been left there more than two or three hours, and I had not the slightest doubt that they were made by those I was pursuing.

The robbers were ahead of me, and Pete was urged to greater speed.

Nobly the mule did its duty, and wisely had I acted in choosing it as my companion for the journey. A horse might have went at a greater speed for a time, but its powers of endurance against fatigue and hunger were not equal to the mule's.

Buck, Bill, and those with them were well mounted, and had two days in advance of me, yet I had nearly overtaken them by steadily pursuing at a slower pace,

and taking less time for the weary animal to rest than they had done. But Pete was not made of iron, and his manner soon began to show it.

As the sun went down, I had much cause for anxiety. The party I was so anxious to overtake were not yet in sight. There was a distance of about twenty-five miles to make that night, and Pete was showing unmistakable signs of fatigue.

I dismounted, and ran for two or three miles, making him trot by my side. Then I made him carry me about five miles further, when the animal stopped, and no entreaties or threats could make it go faster than at a snail's pace.

I was losing valuable time with it, as I could go much faster on foot, than all my exertions could make the exhausted animal move.

Had I followed the bend of the river I should have been near some plantation, where I could get a horse, but I was probably many miles from any such assistance, and driven nearly mad by fear and anxiety, I used the heavy spurs and the ramrod of the rifle, until poor Pete laid down, and I was sure, from the way in which he threw himself upon the ground, that he had taken up his lodgings there for some time—perhaps forever.

I took off the saddle and bridle, and left him, carrying my own rifle in one hand, and Denman's, which I had taken from Sam, in the other.

I heard of men running ten miles an hour, and only for a few dollars in money. Could I not run half as fast when all that I valued most dear was at stake?

I was not more than fifteen or sixteen miles from home, and I judged the time to be about eight o'clock.

I had often run for three or four hours through the forest following game, and under ordinary circumstances I should think but little of the distance now before me. The only fear that tortured me now was about the time.

Should I arrive soon enough to be of any assistance to Ruff? I could only try, and I did try.

The moon rose about an hour after I left Pete, and I recognized, not far away, a high, sugar-loaf shaped hill, which I had seen before. I had chased a herd of deer around it not a year past.

I was thirsty and very weary, but the sight of a piece of earth I had visited from my early home, revived me instantly, but only for a time.

My long, fatiguing journey would be in vain unless I reached home that night, and by twelve o'clock.

I should never forgive myself should I arrive home a minute too late, and knowing this, exerted myself to the utmost.

I walked fast, and ran fast, and occasionally varied those gaits by running slowly in a "dog-trot."

At last I became so weary that it was with much exertion that I could put one foot before the other.

Something told me that I was completely exhausted—that I could only get a few hundred yards further that night, and that I might only be doing myself a mortal injury by going even that distance at present.

It was only weary animal-nature that told me this, but I had the counsel of something more high and noble than that.

Another spirit whispered, "Go on," and reason echoed the command by telling me that my powers of endurance were not yet exhausted, and would not be for many years—not until conquered by the "King of Terrors."

"My physical powers cannot be exhausted in less than a second," thought I, "and if I am able to move in one instant, nothing but God alone can prevent me from moving the next."

God did not prevent me, and I staggered on.

An hour later, and I reached a belt of timber, and found a path leading through it to the left.

I followed the path through the wood until I reached cleared and cultivated fields, and knew that I was near the river.

The fields were soon crossed, and some buildings were

before me. They had a familiar look, and I recognized them as belonging to Mr. Shelby, my father's nearest neighbor. I was but little more than a mile from home.

Buck and Bill were still ahead of me, and God only knows the horrible agony I suffered under the fear that the day I had passed on going south with Denman had been fatal to my future earthly happiness. Common sense and experience should have told me that I would probably meet with some delay in overtaking Ruff.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT THE RENDEZVOUS.

A WALK of a few minutes brought me to the "cross roads," and in front of the ruins, that were once "Old Barton's Store."

But a few yards away I heard voices, and drawing nearer, I recognised Buck, and hastened forward.

Three men mounted on horses, were standing a little distance from the main road, and as I walked up to them, all turned toward me, as though I had been eagerly expected.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Buck, in a sharp tone, that told me my explanation must be made quick and satisfactory.

"Denman has bolted to Texas with everything, and I have come to tell you." I replied.

"Curse you, and Denman too," yelled the angry thief. "Why didn't you shoot him? You are as bad as he is. Do you mean to say that all the niggers joined him?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe you. If you are telling the truth, then I'm an idiot—as big a fool as a tame turkey, that

thinks man is his slave. You don't mean to say that Sam has deserted me?"

"No, not Sam," I replied, when reminded of the faithful negro, who had fallen by my hands. "He would not go with Denman, and was shot."

"That's better," exclaimed Buck in a lower tone. "I'd rather hear that he was dead, than that he had stolen himself from me. Denman is a fool, and shall die without a heart in his carcass. He can't escape me in Texas; I've too many friends thar, for that."

Buck now remained silent, and I inquired of one of the other men, for Bill and the rest of the party.

"We are waiting for 'em," answered the man. "They'll be here in a few minutes. We separated at sunset, so as not to look suspicious, and agreed to meet here, as soon as we could."

"Unless all are here within a few minutes, we shall do nothing now, but wait until to-morrow night."

I also learnt from the man that they had been disappointed in not meeting Lazy Joe—one of my father's slaves, who had promised to assist them.

I was undecided how to act, through the uncertainty of where the ruffain Bill might be.

It was possible that he might visit my father's house before appearing at the rendezvous. This idea made me impatient to hasten home, but I saw no way of getting off without exciting the suspicion of Buck.

Although confident that Ruff would do his duty, still the time had now arrived, when I was anxious to have my eyes on Bill, and to keep them there until his were closed in death.

While waiting impatiently for a few minutes to see whether he would soon join his companions or not, I learnt from the man who had just been talking to me, that the attack on the planters was to commence about two o'clock that morning, and that they would first begin at Rosebrook's, (my father's) plantation, and march up

the river, destroying everything they did not take or drive away.

"We were not to commence until Bill and Ruff joined us," continued the man, "and they must soon be here, for I think from the height of the moon, that it must be more than an hour past midnight."

"Frank," said Buck, "you've got two rifles, whar did you get the second?"

I had held the two guns close together, trying to prevent the discovery he had made, but the sharp eyes of Buck had detected the two, and the affair, to his shrewd, suspicious nature demanded an investigation.

I would not tell him that the rifle was Denman's, for he would blame me for allowing an unarmed man to drive off the property, while I stood lookind on with two rifles in my possession.

I was afraid to tell him the truth, for he might instantly kill me for the death of Sam, upon whom he placed a high value.

I was in a quandary, and silent.

"Whar did you get that rifle, I ask you?" shouted Buck, in a tone that told me his curiosity or suspicion must be satisfied immediately, or there would be war between us.

"Mas'r Buck, is dat you?" exclaimed a voice on the opposite side of way. "Come on Mas'r Harry; Bless de lor, it's Buck."

The voice was that of "Ole Block," whom I had last seen trampled under the horse's feet, and left for dead.

All eyes were turned from me to the negro crossing the road. Two seconds more and I was over the fence into a field of growing maize, that hid me from view.

I first thought of home, and ran a few paces in that direction. Then occurred the thought, that I was leaving Old Ruff to be murdered. He was each moment expected with Bill, and by the time they arrived, Buck would have learnt from Harry Barton, that Ruff and I were traitors to the company.

Not expecting this, Ruff would ride up, and be instantly killed, without having a chance of defending himself.

This would not do, and I turned and hastened as silently as possible in the other way.

The ground over which I ran was soft—the corn having lately been “hoed,” and the rustling of the leaves as I disturbed them in running along the row, was but a little louder than that caused by the breeze as it whistled through the grain.

CHAPTER XXII.

SURPRISED WITH DEATH.

I WAS in some doubt whether to regret the return of Harry Barton and "Old Block" or not. Their arrival, at the moment it occurred, certainly assisted me from a serious difficulty which I was getting into with Buck about the rifle, but it had also been the means of warning him, that in his attempt to pillage the neighborhood, he would meet with the opposition of two who had long known his plans, and who were scheming to prevent their accomplishment.

I was intending to wait until I saw some harm about to be done to me or mine, but it was time that intention was realized now.

Buck had learned that I was a son of William Rosebrook, a man marked by the gang for death. Bill, his wolfish companion, would soon learn the same thing, and I must now act when an opportunity was presented for doing so. Old Ruff must not be sacrificed to his faithful friendship to my family, and a doubt crossed my mind as to whether I had done right in bolting into the corn-field, and escaping without letting the moonlight into Buck's head, through a bullet-hole, before leaving.

"If any harm should happen through this neglect," thought I, "I shall never forgive myself for having lived in vain."

I had not gone more than two hundred yards along the

corn-field before I heard horses galloping along the road, coming up alongside of me.

I was being pursued.

More horsemen were coming from the opposite direction. The two parties would meet opposite me.

"Perhaps," thought I, "those coming from up the river are Bill and Ruff," and I hastened to the fence.

Something seemed to tell me that the moment for which I had long been waiting had nearly arrived. My heart beat strong and wildly.

Several times during the last twenty-four hours I had been strongly tempted to throw away Denman's rifle, but the thought that it might be useful prevented me.

On reaching the fence, I leaned it against the rails, and guided more by instinct than reason, prepared to use my own.

At that moment the two parties of horsemen met, and were exactly opposite where I was standing by the fence, and but a few feet from me.

I recognized Ruff and Bill, and those who had met them as Buck and another of the company. Buck was bringing his rifle to his shoulder, with the muzzle pointed towards Ruff.

I had his head already covered, and with the barrel of my rifle resting on the fence.

The trigger was pulled.

It was a murderous shot—firing at the head of a human being with a rifle at rest, and only at a distance of six paces, but Fate commanded it to be given, for he was about to kill my old friend in the same manner.

Without looking to see the result of the shot, I seized Denman's rifle, and presenting it at Bill, fired.

Two horses galloped away with empty saddles.

Two others were ridden off at a rapid pace by frightened men—weak-minded creatures, who had been led to engage in an unsuccessful enterprise by Buck and Bill, who could now guide them no more.

All the fatigue I had endured for the last three days—

all the suffering from thirst—all the mental anxiety, fever and agony, seemed to produce their evil effects upon me at once.

Had Buck and Bill been alive, I could have traveled on foot to find them for many hours longer without food or water, and could have endured the mental torture of the last few hours without either mind or body yielding, but now, when I believed all danger to be over, all strength, physical and mental, seemed to leave me, and I became as helpless as a child.

All I wanted was rest—rest of soul and body, which Ruff would not allow me to have.

He would worry me with questions.

There was but one question which I thought concerned either of us. That related to Buck and Bill.

“Are they dead,” I asked, “quite dead?”

“Yes,” he replied, “dead as the skunks that sailed with Noah, and it’s doubtful which soul first reached its eternal home.”

I wished to say and hear no more, but Ruff would worry me. He wants me to go home—a journey of more than a mile—which I could not have performed to save my life.

Stretching myself on the long grass, growing in one of the corners of the “snake fence,” I felt more happy than I had ever done before.

The freedom from anxiety, and the relief from the tremendous exertions I had lately been making, made earth a paradise, and my present happiness cheap at the price of all I had suffered.

“Why didn’t you wait, Frank, until they tried to do some harm?” asked Ruff. “It don’t look fair what you’ve done. Some people may say it’s murder.”

“Should I have waited one second longer, until Buck had shot you?” I asked.

“What was Buck gwyne to shoot me for?” asked Ruff. “I sor his shootin’-iron stickin’ to’rds me, but I thort he hadn’t seen who I was.”

"He had just left Harry Barton and 'Old Block,' the negro."

This was all I remember of saving, for the next instant I was in a sound slumber.

On awaking, I found that a saddle was under my head, Ruff's blanket was spread over me—the bright morning sun was shining, and by my side stood my father and Ruff.

"Frank," said the old gentleman, as he stooped down and took my hand, "when I learned that you had absconded from Little Rock, and gone to the prairies, I swore that you should be my son no longer. That oath is broken now, and from this hour you shall never offend me again."

"I've allers told you, Squire," said Ruff, "that Frank was the best young feller in the world, but I believe it's the fashion now-a-days for parents to be onacquainted with thar own sons."

I found, on rising to my feet, that my bones and muscles were a little the worse for my long race the night before, but otherwise I was quite well. I had needed a little repose—nothing more.

Buck and Bill had fallen beside each other. Neither could have suffered much—the first being shot through the head, the latter through the heart.

"I remember both of these men," said my father. "For a long time they were the terror of all respectable people in the county. They came here because they had been driven from some outraged community, and we had no peace until we also drove them out. "This one," continued my father, "swore that he would come back sometime and murder me, and it appears that he had honesty enough to try and keep his word."

"It would have done you good, Squire," said Ruff, "if you had seen 'em last night lyin' on the ground, and kickin' thurselves, jest as though it was done fōr spite."

My father was now anxious for me to return home.

"None of the rest of the family know that you are

here," said he, "or they would have all been here, undressed. Our friend, Ruff, would only have me disturbed."

"What has become of Lazy Joe?" I asked.

"Lazy Joe died last week, of the cholera," answered my father, and I believe he died happy at the idea that he was cheating me out of the money that I might have sold him for."

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

My first business, on reaching home, (as soon as my mother and sisters would let me perform it,) was to send two black boys after Pete, the mule.

I told them the road, or path to follow, and described the sugar-loaf hill, beyond which I had left the mule lying, and bade them never to return, without bringing the animal with them.

During the day all the neighbors for five miles around, were mounted, and out man-hunting.

The result of this grand hunt was the capture of Harry Barton, "Ole Block," and the ugly cur that followed them.

Ruff and I went to have a look at them, when they were brought in, and three more miserable objects we had never seen. Harry had a bullet in his body, for which he was indebted to Ruff, at the time they parted on the prairies. From his emaciated appearance, and the hoarse whisper in which he addressed me, I believed the wound to be mortal.

The attempt of Buck, Bill, and others to kill "Ole Block," only resulted in breaking some of his ribs, crushing one of his long heels, knocking out one of his eyes, and doing some other little injuries, which Block said were not "wuth lookin' affer."

The dog was still carrying the same wounded leg we had seen him take away, three weeks before.

The three were nearly starved to death, and Harry informed me that they had not lost an hour more than was necessary, in coming from the place where we had left them.

I had thought that my journey was one of many hardships, but it was a delightful one, compared with theirs. They had been nearly three weeks in coming one hundred miles, and never had been able to make more than six or seven miles in a day by toiling on the road for sixteen hours.

"I should never have got here, but for Ole Block," said Harry. "He sought for me when unable to stand, and crawled on all fours until he found me. He crawled to the brook, and brought me water.

The next day we commenced our journey, and moved slowly on in great agony, until night came upon us, and I don't believe we made a distance of more than two miles. Who says I'm not a man—one who cannot suffer anything for the accomplishment of an object?"

"No one will say so," I replied, "but what was your object in suffering so much in hastening here?"

"So as to be here in time. I knew there would be strange scenes here, and I wanted to see what they would be like."

"I suppose you have learnt," said I, "that the long-planned attack of robbers and thieves, on the respectable planters of this neighborhood, has ended in the death of Buck and Bill?"

"Yes, and I was happy to hear of it. They deserved a worse death."

"But I thought they were your confederates. Would you not have been pleased, had they succeeded in the object of their journey?"

"Yes, certainly, for I wanted to go with them to Texas.

Old Ruff was quite right in the explanations he had

given of Harry's conduct. The youth was not a responsible being. The explanation of what seemed an unaccountable mystery, was so simple, that I had not discovered it.

In the morning, the "boys" returned, leading the mule Pete, with them.

The poor animal was stiff in all its joints, and only able to hobble along, with much difficulty. I never required any more service of Pete, since then, but have allowed him to remain a pensioner on my industry, and had him well looked after.

Old Ruff, in praising my generosity, has been known to say, that I have "kept the mule like a gentleman."

Being well acquainted with his way of talking, I knew that by the word gentleman, he meant the mule.

After my trip to the prairies, I became a favorite with all the young ladies of the county.

There was but one little fact that counted against me in their estimation of my character. It was that the old ladies spoke well of me, also.

This was not at all in my favor, with the young ones, for the "model young man" of Arkansas mothers, is generally looked upon as a weak minded, harmless noodle, by their more highly educated daughters.

This, however, was not the opinion of one fair Arkansas lass of me; for two years after the events I have endeavored to describe—, one of them took me for "better or worse."

It was Miss Mary Shelby, who, in becoming my wife, only fulfilled a promise she had made, when a child.

I have become what is called a "respectable planter." This is a vague definition, but it would require a volume to describe, to most readers of the English language what that term implies, and I cannot attempt it here.

Old Ruff is with me, making himself generally useful on the plantation, and occasionally grumbling about the curses civilization and improvement bring upon a country.

As his eyes are not so good as they once were, he has had to relinquish his rifle for a fowling-piece, it being the best for pigeon shooting. This change was made with much reluctance for the reason that in his opinion, shooting with a shot gun, is an English, and unmanly way of seeking amusement.

Harry Barton was tried for the murder of his uncle, and sentenced to be imprisoned as a criminal lunatic but died on the way to the prison.

"Ole Block," was also tried for an accomplice to the murder, but it appeared that he knew nothing of the deed, until after it was committed. His trial resulted in a decision, that he was no more responsible than a faithful dog. His only fault was that he would obey a master either good or bad. No planters would condemn a servant for that, and Block was allowed to retire into private life. He has ever since been a servant on Mr. Shelby's plantation.

On the day after Mary and I were married, "Ole Block invited the two families to meet him at the ruins of Old Barton's Store. In the cellar, with one minutes work, he showed us an iron pot containing five thousand dollars, and several papers, and amongst them a will.

Mr. Barton had left all his property to his niece, Mary Shelby, on condition, that she did not marry her cousin, Henry Barton.

"Dis money is what Massa Harry went mad for," said Block, as we were returning to Mr. Shelby's house. He could not find the money no whar, and was obliged to go to the woods instead of New Orleans."

"And did you know all this time that the money was buried where you found it?" I asked.

"No not edzactly," he replied, "but a few days afore he was killed, I knowed he buried somethin' in the cellar, because I seed him do it, and it just occurred to me yesterday, that it might have been the money."

It was fortunate for me that this idea was so long in reaching an understanding.

The story of my life is told.

“Very well, but why call it *The Arkansas Traveler*?”
the reader may ask.

My answer to that is, that I have traveled a little in Arkansas, and no where else, and that I have not the slightest intention of ever moving beyond the boundaries of my Native State.

THE END.

THE END

THE END

order MUNRO'S, and see that "MUNRO" is on the cover.

TEN CENT NOVELS.

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| 2 | 3 Pat. | 4 Fugitive
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